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THE REALITY OF FAITH



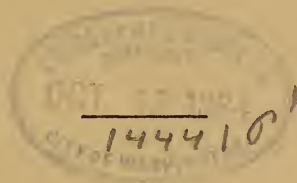
THE
REALITY OF FAITH

BY

NEWMAN SMYTH

AUTHOR OF "OLD FAITHS IN NEW LIGHT," "ORTHODOX THEOLOGY
OF TO-DAY," ETC.

*"Great reconciling principles, which, if I could declare them, might set
the age free from some of its divisions."*—F. D. MAURICE.



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PREFACE.

M. TAINE, in his description of the transition from the classic to the modern age of English literature, informs us that "when Roland, being made a minister, presented himself before Louis xvi. in a simple dress-coat and shoes without buckles, the master of the ceremonies raised his hands to heaven, thinking that all was lost. In fact, all was changed."

Marked changes of late years have fallen over the modes of religious thought and speech, and some among us, too easily alarmed, like the master of ceremonies, have thrown up their hands to heaven as though all were lost. In fact, there prevails in the religious world a strong and growing desire to escape from the artificial, the mechanical, and the formal, and to find the natural, the living, and the real in Christian faith and practice. Among the laity there is noticeable an honest impatience with continued theological controversy, and an increasing concern in those pressing problems of real life which wait, around the very doors of our churches, for their solution in social righteousness and peace. Among the

better educated and more thoughtful clergy, there is evident a genuine and often intense desire to go behind the Protestant traditions, to avoid professional phrases and judgments, and to study theology afresh in the first facts and actual processes of revelation and life, and in the real spirit of Christianity. They see that the popular reaction from all theology, although justly provoked by weariness of theological abstractions and strife, threatens to cut life loose from the divine truth which is the motive-power of social morality; and they are anxious, therefore, to keep the vital truths of faith in efficient contact with the thoughts and purposes of men. They see clearly, and feel strongly, that we need, not so much a new theology, but a real theology.

One of our easily besetting sins as religious thinkers and teachers is the sin of nominalism in theology. Athanasius saw occasion to warn contending theologians in his day not to strive about words. This caution of the great theologian of the early Church is always in order. It is easy for us to forget the supreme realities in our zeal for the phrases and forms which have come to stand for the living elements of our faith. Often it is easier for us to rest satisfied with some scientific definition of a truth than it is for us to seek humbly and patiently for the real, and perhaps larger fact of revelation. It is easier sometimes for us to follow the short cut of our own logic straight through the Bible than it is to pursue the longer, and often winding way of God's

thought and God's patience in the history of revelation and redemption. The questions, however, which of late the clergy have been called to meet, are not chiefly questions about particular words of doctrine, but they concern the reality of all faith. Present religious issues are not formed around some special system of Christian doctrines ; religion itself is confronted with unbelief. The religious question is between practical atheism and real faith in the living God. We are compelled, therefore, by the providence of the hour to return to the first, commanding principles of the Christian revelation ; and we should not regard with suspicion, but welcome with friendly ecclesiastical hospitality, all inquiries, and especially any new Biblical studies, which may enable us to stand more intelligently and securely upon the final facts of the work of the Spirit of God in human consciousness and in the history of redemption.

The present spirit and quiet determination of the independent evangelical clergy do not threaten further divisions and strife among brethren. On the contrary, only in the humble, yet fearless desire to discover and to acknowledge the real and the vital in every form of belief, and in all the historic creeds, can any of us hope to win the blessing of the peacemaker in modern thought and life. This spirit and desire are the opposite of sectarianism and individualism ;—as it was a real faith in truth, and a living sympathy with men, which enabled Maurice to write of himself these words: "I feel that

I am to be a man of war against all parties, that I may be a peacemaker between all men."

Some among us, indeed, fear that the religious history of New England is about to repeat itself, and they warn us of the danger of another schism like that which, in the early years of this century, rent our churches in twain. It is true that incidental evils which we have suffered from that separation are passing away. We are out-living the harm and hurt to faith from a too self-contained and disputatious divinity in our theological schools and our pulpits. It is true that theological dogmatism is somewhat sobered by the responsibilities of modern thought. But they who fear a repetition of the divisions of the past, fail to discern the better spirit which already pervades, and is moving, the whole religious community. They need to lift up their eyes and to behold the evident signs of the working in our own day of that higher Power which one of the pilgrim fathers called, "Zion's Wonder-working Providence in New England." The conservatism of providence appears, not in our cries of alarm and separation, but in the gain of a more real and catholic Christianity in all denominations of believers. The manifest destiny of religious thought and life is not further ages of persecutions and controversies, but a growing fulfillment of Christ's prayer for the oneness of his disciples that the world may believe that the Father hath sent him. The present missionary opportunity of the Church is a signal and

commanding providence, calling us all away from unseemly contentions and needless offense.

The pulpit has rightly been made in New England the last court of appeal in the trial of theological teachings and tendencies. Calvinism has already been largely modified in this country by the practical demands of the pulpit. Any friction of our forms of doctrine, and loss of power, in the work of the pulpit, betray some mal-adjustment of our theology to the actual requirements of the world upon faith, and indicate the necessity of some further improvement of our methods, or reconstruction of our system of beliefs. We must have in every age good working creeds, if we are to keep the faith. The doctrine of the Son of man was always life for life.

The following sermons are taken from those which I have had occasion to preach, during the past two years, in a pulpit whose liberty has been won by others before me, and to a congregation whose thoughtful attention has been a constant encouragement. The title, under which I have gathered them, expresses a conviction and a desire which will be found, I trust, pervading them all. I certainly have not attempted in this volume of sermons to construct any complete and closed system of divinity—I have not sought even to formulate anew a single doctrine of grace; still less have I been anxious to state, or to defend, any “new theology.” “Alas for me,” said that most daring of speculative theologians, Richard Rothe, “if Christianity be not more than my

system of it." Our thought is never more than a cupful of God's truth. Yet there is a blessing promised to him who brings a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple. And many souls are thirsting for some living truth from our pulpits.

It should not need to be said that these sermons represent no party in the Church, and no school in theology: no views of mine should be imputed to any of those honored theological teachers and professors with whom I am glad to claim fellowship in the general sympathies of a profound religious movement for the more thorough Christianization of theology, and with whom, also, I rejoice in the belief that we have in the Word made flesh a real revelation, from the real God, to the real life of the world.

NEW HAVEN, Conn., August 1st, 1884.

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THE REALITY OF FAITH.

I.

FAITH A PREPARATION FOR SIGHT.

"And I saw visions of God."—EZEKIEL i. 1.

It is a suggestive remark of the late Canon Mozley, in his fine discourse upon Nature, that "Scripture has specially consecrated the faculty of sight. . . . The glorified saint of Scripture is especially a beholder; he gazes, he looks; . . . he does not merely ruminate within, but his whole mind is carried out toward and upon a great representation."

Moses, and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, we read in the book of Exodus, went up, and "they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." "And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." So the history of Israel begins before Sinai with Moses' vision of God;

and the Christian prophet, at the close of the history of redemption, saw "a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away."

You need only trace through the Scriptures the use of the words relating to sight to become aware of this characteristic of the Bible that it brings its spiritual teachings and its promises to vivid, pictorial representation through the human eye and its visions. Thus, when the prophet comes with a word of the Lord to the king of Israel, he said: "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left." The Messianic promise is unfolded in pictures of visible splendors. The wilderness is glad; the desert blossoms as a rose. "They shall see," Isaiah sings, "the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." The New Testament employs the same clear language of the eye in its presentation of the kingdom of God, and the hope of redemption. Jesus' blessing to the pure in heart is that they shall see God. He spoke to a Master in Israel of the new birth, without which no man can *see* the kingdom of God. The first Christian martyr, "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The missionary apostle, who had learned what all trial is, knows no better way of describing who the Christians are than by calling them those who "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." The true Christian life was, in his experience of it, a "looking unto Jesus." Faith is living

as "seeing him who is invisible." Not yet, indeed, have believers ascended into the immediate vision of God; "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Christian hope, which we are told should now purify our hearts, is that "we shall see him as he is."

Not to quote other passages of Scripture which show how the Bible employs the language of sight to convey its revelations, let me call your attention to the significance of this Biblical method of speech. For it is deeply significant. The inspiration of the Spirit discloses itself in the boldness, clearness, and impressiveness with which, throughout the Bible, unseen and spiritual things are represented as though they were visible—as though we could see them. The glory of the Lord, the kingdom of God, Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the coming of the Lord in the glory of the angels, the new heavens and the new earth, the heavenly Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God;—what other book, what in this Book of books but the Spirit of the Lord, has made the unseen realities of the eternity around us appear in such power of visible form and light?

By this "consecration of sight," and through this powerful pictorial language of the Bible, the Lord and Master of the Scriptures evidently means to impress upon us the outward reality of the unseen world. Let me explain.

The human eye is the flower of the senses. Touch is said by the physiologists to be the ground-form of all

sensation. Touch may be the root, as it were, of the senses, but sight is the consummate flower of sensation. The sense of touch, growing out of close contact with the elements of nature, and reaching up into the light, blossoms at length into the perfect eye with its world of beauty. Sight is at once the freest and surest, the largest and the clearest contact of the intelligence within us with the real order of the world without us. Touch may be the beginning, but sight is the perfection of our belief that there is a world of reality beyond our self-conscious thought, an outward world in which, with others like ourselves, we live and move and have our being. In short, what we see with our eyes, we believe exists. Philosophers, indeed, may doubt this; but, to the common sense of men in general, sight is the evidence that things are what they are seen to be.

You will perceive, then, one of the important meanings of this characteristic Biblical presentation of truth as a spectacle which the believer beholds. The Spirit of the Bible uses this language of vision to impress upon us the outward reality of the divine verities which it reveals. They are to prophets of old as objects of sight. The Apostles looked forward in hope to the perfection of sight in the vision of Christ at the right hand of God and the glory of the city of God. This manner in which the inspired Scriptures keep us constantly looking out upon the sublime realities of God's kingdom, as seeing Him who is invisible, is in marked contrast with the manner in which men of the world are apt to regard religion, and unlike even modes of religious experience or expression very common among

believers. Thus a great many persons, when religious duties are urged upon them, will respect what may be said to them as a sincere expression of the thought or feeling of the person who speaks to them about religion, but his words will hardly stand to their minds for any corresponding realities; they do not associate religious ideas with the objects in this world which have to them present reality, with those things in life which press upon them, and in which they are actively engaged. Religion seems to them rather to be a system of uncertain beliefs, a series of fine sentiments—something for philosophers to discuss, or, at best, a poetic satisfaction for desires and emotions which float, cloud-like, above the ordinary paths of life, and which take the hues and aspects of individual temperaments and moods, changing and changeable with the times and seasons. Am I mistaken in saying that to a large number of people engrossed in the business of the world, pressed by its tangible necessities, crowded by its urgent tasks, dealing every day with its positive and palpable objects, the call of religion seems usually like a distant and unintelligible sound—like the echo of an Alpine horn among the mountains just heard in the valleys, a sound not near enough to cause them to stop and look up from their work; not a personal call summoning them to a task at once to be undertaken, or a duty to be met? This world is real and present to them every day; religion is unreal to them. This world is near and definite to them; the next world undefined and distant as the sky.

The disregard and indifference to religious matters which such persons evince might have some justification

if religion were simply a matter of inward contemplation, or if religious beliefs were merely the play of so many illumined emotions over the surface of real life. But what if these religious feelings are our natural instincts of eternal realities? What if these profound religious convictions, which men in all ages have cherished, are the impressions which a living God is making of his own being upon the living soul of man? What if these ideas of God, and immortality, and the judgment, are now the dim dawnings upon us of something which, ere long, shall be the one reality around us, outward, present, and visible, wherever the soul shall turn, as now this world is the object which fills the eye? What if these feelings, intuitions, half-understood truths of divinity, are the sure signs and indications, if we read them aright, that the eyes of our spirits are now forming for the future open perception of the world of unseen and abiding realities—for the vision of God?

Turn again, then, to the Bible and observe how these things which we do not see are spoken of as though they were the things to be seen—the great divine spectacle which all, some day, must see. These visible earthly things, which seem to us solid realities, fade in these Scriptures into metaphors of those invisible things which, to the eye of the inspired prophet, stand out upon our history as God's purposes and God's judgments; and to Jesus, who knew the Father, all outward nature was but a parable of the kingdom of heaven. The Bible is pervaded throughout with a wonderful sense of the reality of spiritual things. It makes this passing world seem the shadow, and the other world the sub-

stance. The Bible is an open eye for the spiritual world. Through the Bible we seem to be looking out upon the realm of God's presence and purposes, and spiritual things are spread like a broad landscape before us in the light of the glory of God. The Spirit of God, through these Scriptures, inverts the common order of our experience, for it makes this world, which is close around us, grow distant as we read; and that land which is far away, draws near. We walk with the prophets in visions of God; with the disciples our conversation is in heaven; in any circle where Jesus stands in the midst this earth seems to pass away, and the kingdom of God, and its peace, becomes all in all.

Such, I say, is the unmistakable impression of the reality of unseen things which the Word of God makes upon man. Whenever we give ourselves up to its influence, such is the sense of the reality of divine things which often, unawares, comes over us; it breaks, for moments, at least, the spell of this world upon us. Such has been in the history of thought the power of these inspired Scriptures in bringing out, almost as in visible reality, the other world, and the glory of God.

But it is hard for men in general to gain and to keep against the impressions of the senses this strong Biblical sense of the realities of faith. Yet just this intense sense of spiritual reality is perhaps the chief need of faith at the present time. There is so much in our worldliness and our culture to make our spiritual life seem to be our dream-life, and our present pursuit of happiness our real life. There is much, also, both in the questionings of science, and the overbeliefs of human theologies, to throw

thoughtful minds into uncertainty and a sense of vague unreality with regard to religious truths. But, on the other hand, the longing, the passion, for reality is one of the strongest and most significant characteristics of that revival of religious thought and faith which from many sources is rising and growing in power at the present time. It used to be said of Dr. Arnold that his daily longing was to go beyond words to realities. That longing is now at the heart of the most religious thought of the Christian world. It is the intense desire to see things as they are; to behold the living truth come forth from the ceremonies of words in which custom and tradition have bound it; to look beyond the material forms which perish, and these physical forces over against which our wills stand self-conscious, and to discern something of the intelligence which works through all; to look, also, through Christianity and through the Bible, to the presence of divinity, and to find, amid our strange history of sin and death, the real self-revelation of God in the history of redeeming love. It is this intense longing for the real in religion which creates sometimes undue impatience of old forms of faith, and which certainly can never rest satisfied in the acceptance of mere propositions about religion. "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Nothing else will. We want not more correct beliefs, but more faith. We want faith in the reality of all spiritual things; in our own souls; in the heaven of souls who are not to be lost from love in death; in the living God, who is present in this world, here and now, as well as once and there; the Father who knows us, who thinks of us where we are.

“Show us the Father!” We do not want words about things beyond us; we do not want arguments and more probabilities about divinity; we do not want systems of thought to bow down to and worship; alas! men’s systems of divinity may be the idols which the people set up while the true prophet is waiting upon the mountain for some vision of God. We want more reality in faith. We want to be in Him that is true. We want to know whether the whole creation is a vast gilded emptiness; whether our life is but a bubble, catching a moment’s sunbeam perhaps, and then breaking in the restless deep, upon whose surface it had a brief existence; whether anything is real and true and everlasting; whether we are and God is; for if we could be sure of the one, we could easily believe the other. “Show us the Father!” so out of the deepest doubt springs the prayer of the highest faith; “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” And the Master knew our great want. “He that hath seen me,” he answered, “hath seen the Father;” “Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me?” Oh, doubt of faith! oh, spirit of an age searching for visions of the real and everlasting! have I been so long time with you—with you in the centuries’ mighty works of faith, with you in this new creation of my redeeming love still growing and exulting before your eyes, with you in your own doubt and searching for the living God, and yet hast thou not known me?

“Yes,” but some one says, “here you will evade again in words our want of faith; we ask for proof of things hoped for, and your answer is the expansion of some

text from the Bible." I admit that it is so. I admit that somehow whenever we find ourselves searching for the real heart of things, we discover ourselves repeating, and dwelling upon, some word of Jesus Christ. I admit that when we have reached the end of our own knowledge, and, pressed still on by the irresistible desire to know what is behind and beyond that which we see and touch, we still question and search, we do find that these Scriptures open ways for our souls straight out into a diviner world; and where all human wisdom is silent, the words of One who seemed to know come ringing down through the centuries, awakening echoes as of forgotten reminiscences of heaven and God in our own souls; and where all our science is but larger ignorance, there in Jesus' light we see light. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." But let me make, if possible, the real reasons of this confidence more definite.

I have already said that the Bible does what is done nowhere else in the world, viz., takes impalpable spiritual things and spreads them, like landscapes, around us as we read. It imparts a tremendous conception of the present reality of the world to come. Human empires become the dust of earth; the kingdom of God is forever. I would say now, besides this, that faith, and especially Biblical faith, has certain resemblances to the sight of the eye. The Apostle, it is true, contrasted faith with sight; we are absent, Paul said, from the Lord; we walk by faith, not by sight. We do not now have such open knowledge of the eternal reality as we do of the fields or mountains upon which we may look; if we did,

such knowledge might be the end of that discipline of character which is now possible because unbelief also is possible. Full and open revelation of the glory of the Lord to all men on earth, as God is seen by the angels in heaven—would not that be the beginning of the day of judgment? So in this trial-world—in this time of our education and discipline—we walk by faith, not by sight as yet; but, nevertheless, faith also is a kind of seeing; it may be a rudimentary perception of the world of light. Faith is soul-seeing; faith is the insight of the spirit which is in us into the divine heart of things without us. Nay, faith is the undying affirmation of the human heart that the darkness and want of which it is conscious are the evidence of the fullness of life and the light for which we must have been created, and which somewhere, sometime, our seeking shall find. Faith is the embryonic eye of the soul for the world to come of eternal reality and unutterable glory. I think I can make this plainer by an illustration which I often use for myself. Let me suppose, as some theorists would go so far as to assert, that the eye was slowly developed from the merest rudimentary susceptibility to light. Before the eye was created, or began to grow, no living thing could have had any sense of darkness. Does a man born blind have any sense of darkness? Having not the slightest sense of light, how can he have that positive sense of darkness which we experience when we close our eyes? Were it not for the words of men who see, this world of light and colors would be as unknown to a man born blind as heaven is to us. He would have no possible place for a world of light anywhere within the range of

his positive experience of life. He knows neither light nor darkness. Consciousness of darkness implies some sense of light. Suppose the sense of sight, then, to have been in the animal creation at first rudimentary. Or, what is better for my purpose, suppose that in a conscious, intelligent race of beings, the eye, or the capacity to come into relation to the world of light, begins little by little to develop. At first, then, the sense of light would be a dim perception of darkness. In comparison with the utterly visionless state, a change would impress itself upon the consciousness ; such beings would perceive something in themselves which they could not understand ; and meeting one another, in their first rudimentary beginnings of vision, would begin to wonder what the strange sensation meant ; what the new consciousness of darkness—the inborn, growing longing and endeavor for something unrealized as yet—could possibly mean. Suppose the process of growing vision to continue. They begin to distinguish light from darkness, or, at least, one part of their existence during half of every twenty-four hours has something strange about it which marks it off from the other half. Suppose, then, at length, the susceptibility for light becomes the perfect eye ; the vague feeling of light passes into the clear vision of the day. A world unknown before nature in this race of beings began to feel after the light, a world at first vaguely dreamed of when the rudiments of sight began to form, denied by those who would believe nothing beyond tangible experience, yet believed in, and longed for, by those who felt that their growing knowledge of their darkness must mean something beyond—some satisfac-

tion to come—this world now spreads its bright scenes before the finished eye of the perfect man, and it is seen to have been existing around them all the while ; it had existed from the beginning, although before it had been wholly beyond the experience of a sightless race, who, nevertheless, were walking in it, though they did not know it ; it was near them, waiting to be revealed, though their eyes were not yet opened to behold it.

So I would say that faith is a kind of seeing—man's first rudimentary perception of the heavenly world. Faith is the beginning of spiritual sight. We know that it is dark ; and how could we know that, if there were no glimmering of celestial light, if we were not now beginning to see ? The soul of man is the forming eye for the light of the glory of God. We know already that there is a high and holy portion of our experience which seems totally unlike the part of our life in contact with this material world. We know that something has touched us which makes us profoundly susceptible to influences from beyond our present narrow world of sense, and deeply conscious of longings for something yet to be revealed. We know that our sense of want and darkness is prophetic of something grand and beautiful beyond. We know that so much of truth and light from beyond has been given us that we cannot help living in a state of expectancy and great spiritual hope. Shall God's own prophecy of the forming eye of the spirit within us for visions of the God around us prove the great mockery and deception of the universe ? Ah ! but within the whole compass of our experience of nature our science cannot point to a single, solitary false

prophecy of life. Why, then, shall the truth of nature suddenly become falsehood within the human soul? No; faith is the apparent beginning within us of the capacity to see the divine Reality in which we have our being. All the years of this present stage of human development heaven may have been existing near man as the world of light to the blind—near us, another, most real world in this same great universe in which we now walk by faith, as the day is another unknown world beyond the experience of, but near, the sightless. Faith shall pass into the open vision. The other world, now unseen, but not unknown, shall be revealed in its breadth and in its beauty—the world which needs no sun for its day, for God's presence is its light—the land of life immortal which is not far off, where we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known.

I have not yet brought out of this thought all that is in it. I have been speaking of faith in general, of man's intuitive sense, that is, of spiritual and divine reality; and I have just affirmed that this most human faith is at least a knowledge of our darkness, which implies some light from above. It is an experience of the soul—constant and indestructible in the life of humanity—which betrays the existence of something beyond. But when this general human faith is touched by the Spirit of God—when the soul opens in sudden, and often thrilling responsiveness to the call of divine grace,—oh! then, it is like the opening of the eye to a new world. The work of the Holy Spirit does quicken wonderfully and enhance the power of faith. A spiritual assurance follows the touch of the Spirit of Christ.

In our conversion we discovered for what we were created. Behold, all things are become new! Henceforth we wait in hope. We trust the dawning vision, and follow it, and it does not lead us into disappointment. The more we believe it, the more we find our lives enlarged, our happiness enriched, and our hearts at peace. The growing prophecy of the growing light has been good, and only good to us from the first hour when we were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. We know in whom we have believed. We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ. We shall need only to die to see him as he is.

This brings us to the concluding thought which I had intended for the second half of my sermon, but which I must now dismiss with a few words. I refer to another very significant use of the language of the eye in the Bible. Briefly it is this: Through the eye we are brought into the most perfect union with nature. The eye unites us, as no other sense does, to the world without. The perfection of our life in this earth is in seeing. Consider, then, in this respect what these Scriptures mean. Not only is there a divine world of eternal reality in which we are to live forever, but we are to see it with open vision; we are to behold the unveiled glory of the Lord. We are to live, that is, in the most perfect conceivable union and harmony with the eternal reality, made one with the blessed presence of God. This is the true, the eternal life, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. We are to dwell immortal in God's own

world, in his own heaven, ourselves at last perfectly adapted and harmonized to that sphere of light and life ; or, as the Scripture represents it, and as the saints in all ages have desired to realize it, we are to dwell in the vision of God. And that disciple who had seen Jesus and the glory as of the only begotten Son of God in Jesus Christ, as he looked forward in the bright Christian expectation to his life after death with the Lord, wrote for us these assured words of faith : "It doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Shall not our eyes become sunny with this Christian hope ? Thank God for those aged Christians, waiting their translation, who already in this world seem to have come out upon the bright side of their life's trouble ! They shall behold the city of God ! We all are waiting for the day of God. We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

II.

GOD'S SELF-REVELATION THROUGH LIFE.

"And the Life was the Light of Men."—JOHN i. 4.

THERE are texts in the Bible which are like springs of water among the mountains. When our thoughts grow weary of climbing, when in life's glare our hearts are athirst, we return and rest by these quiet springs of inspiration. Beside these unfailing fountains of truth we build the tabernacles of our lives. Such texts are Scriptures like these: God is love; God is light; God so loved the world; Our Father which art in heaven; Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. To one of this class of Scriptures I would come back with you this morning. No men more than we, who live in this noon-tide glare of history, ever needed to find for themselves and to drink of those fountains of life which spring ever fresh from beneath the foundations of the world. I believe the text to which I would now lead your thought does contain truth of God old as the creation and new as to-day. To return to this truth, to fill our cup from this pure, deep word of God, may refresh and invigorate our faith for present trials and endeavor.

In the first place, this Scripture opens to us God's living way of making himself known on earth. It is now of increasing importance that we should have truth-

ful ideas concerning the way in which God has made himself known to us. All persons who read current literature are aware that the nature and claims of the Bible are now discussed with a freedom and vigor of criticism such as would hardly have been tolerated not many years ago. Many are alarmed at this criticism of the sacred book, and would banish it as an evil spirit of doubt from the pulpit and the Church. Whole denominations are thrown into excitement because, during the past year, certain of their scholars have been calmly discussing in books and in reviews the question of the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch. One thing seems certain: whether we will it or not, the providence of God is ordaining that in our day the Bible shall be brought under a more microscopic, more exacting, and more scientific examination than it has ever before received in the history of the Church. Another thing seems equally clear: although the pulpit should choose to ignore this providential order of religious inquiry, it cannot by any enforced silence keep the people from knowledge of what is transpiring among the thinkers and scholars of the world. Though our youth may hear nothing and learn nothing from the pulpit of such inquiries into all sacred things, they will hear much, and learn a little, of these things from the newspapers, and the magazines, and free religious platforms. They will be in danger of forming for themselves a kind of scrap-book infidelity, picked up from the newspaper odds and ends of the world's scholarship—an infidelity made up of broken pieces of science, and dashes of color from literature, without unifying principle or consistency of substance.

I believe it was Aristotle of old who objected to commerce because foreign notions would corrupt the youth of Athens. The days, however, have long gone by when we can keep out the danger of doubt and unbelief by putting a high ecclesiastical tariff on theological importations, and protect domestic faith by laying an embargo upon foreign thought. If our pulpits cannot stand upon divine facts in our human history; if they cannot stand upon what God has done, calm, confident and hopeful, though knowledge flows in upon us like a flood, and all the breezes of discussion are astir around us; then no mere breakwaters which councils may try to build of customs and creeds can prevent us from being swept away. Like the house of the Lord's parable, Christian faith cannot be securely built upon the sands of human traditions; we must go down, before we begin to build, to the rock of divine fact in the creation and history, and upon that rock our faith can stand, a secure dwelling-place and home for all who enter in.

The Biblical foundation of faith is not the manner in which holy men of old may have spoken, or the mode of their inspiration; it is the fact of a divine revelation through the history of Israel from Abraham to Christ. The life was the light of men. God's way of shining on this earth has been above all through life. But how? By what life? The Bible gives the answer to this question: for the Bible shows us God's actual way with men; his way through history; his way of making his truth and his law known through historical processes, down a line of chosen men, and in combinations of events gathering around one central event of history.

The Bible is the record and interpretation of a way of creation and of life which leads from the promise of the beginning on and on, with a purpose never given up, and toward a goal never lost from sight, and against all human gravitation downward from its high intent, until it completes its course in that one sinless life through which God shines—the true Light—the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. In other words, God has not made himself known to us simply by talking with men about his divinity, or by inspiring certain men to write true words about his law. God has been present as a living power in man's life, as the educating and redemptive power in Israel, as the grace and truth of life in Jesus Christ who has declared him. Such is God's real self-revelation, his life in men's life, his life in the Christ for our life. The Bible is the best means we have, probably the best means for all purposes which we could have, of knowing what God has done for us and is for us. The Bible is the means which God has himself provided for this end; it is sufficient, and is sufficiently inspired by the Spirit of truth, for this educational purpose for which God has given it to us. But we need to beware how we take the means for the end, or mistake the form of revelation for the substance. And no mistake could at present more imperil faith than for us to lead men to suppose that the real revelation which God has made of his righteousness and grace in the history of redemption is identical with the written Scriptures, or sacred literature, which reflect that revelation; or that Christianity, which results directly from Christ's life and death, is dependent for its existence in

the world upon the writings which the providence of God led the early Church to gather from the age of the Apostles as the authentic records and authoritative declaration of the teachings of Jesus. The life was the light of men ; that was the true Light ; the Word that was with God and was God.

Divine providence, likewise, took thought of the human mirrors which should reflect for the world that light. Moses and Isaiah, John and Paul, prophets and apostles, were placed by providence at proper distances and stations to reflect for the world the growing revelation—the light from above, which at last shone full in the face of Jesus Christ. But the revelation from God, and the different reflections of it in the several Scriptures from their various angles and positions, are not one and the same thing. The light from God is one thing, and the glass through which we receive it is another thing ; and if a flaw of Rabbinical Judaism, or some error of the scribe should be found in the Old Testament or the New, the divineness of the real and original revelation would not in the least be affected thereby. The Bible and the Church are both the results of revelation ; Christ stands above both as their divine original and Lord. The commonest illustration may serve to bring out the fact which I would insist upon as now important for faith to keep in view. You have, let me suppose, in your house a genealogical register of your family. The day of your own birth is recorded. You can trace back your family-line. But you do not need the book to prove that you are here. You do not need the genealogy to show what manner of man you

are. Your life is its own witness. You carry your ancestors about with you; their features in your face; their ways in your motions. Though a critic, poring over the book, should discover some discrepancies in the record of your descent, that would not alter the fact that you were born with certain family-traits, and no flaw in the genealogy can affect the record which you are making by your own life.

So Christianity is here, in this world, though self-evidently not of it. It has come here to stay. It is its own evidence. It has also its record and writing of interpretation. We are assured by the evangelist of the record which God hath given of his Son. A divine life was worthy of an inspired record. The Son of man and the Book of books have both their permanent place in the providence of redeeming love; yet the divine Man is before and above the inspired book; and there may be marks of the touch of human fingers upon the book, while no human errors shall cling to the garments of the Son of God. The written Gospel is indeed worthy of the God-man. His Spirit is in it. The immediate reflection of the Christ in these Gospels removes them from all possible classification with other literature; as a mirror with the sun in it differs from the glass before which you strike your little taper, so these Gospels differ by the radiance of the heavens in them from all other books. Nevertheless, our faith in the real or original revelation, in the Christ of the Gospels, does not depend upon absolute flawlessness in the reflecting glass. That is a question of fact for the critics. Let them examine and scrutinize every point in the whole Bible to their

heart's content ; we are not anxious to dispute concerning the composition of the mirrors ; we are content to receive the light which, by its own radiance, proclaims its celestial source ; in this light of life we can walk, rejoicing as children of the day.

I have indicated thus in general the truth concerning God's way of making himself known, which may serve to render us both honest toward any facts which may ever be brought out concerning the Bible, and, at the same time, fearless in our faith in the Word made flesh which dwelt among us, and of whose glory not the chosen Apostles only testify, but the whole of Christianity is the perpetual witness. I need not stop to guard this truth from all possible misunderstanding or abuse, but pass on now to another implication of our text.

Secondly, this Scripture discloses God's way of illumining our lives. Christ entering into human life is its light. I wish to bring out again, at this point, an old truth—a truth of human experience as old as those days long ago when Jesus first called men to come to him, and they found that he knew what was in man, and in his presence they came to their own, best, truest selves—a truth old as Jesus' first miracle among men, yet new as the last-converted soul—an old truth growing newer and fresher as the world becomes more Christian—the truth that the Christ from God alone is equal to all human needs ; the truth that he only touches human nature in all its chords ; beats all life's music out ; lights up all our history. Christianity alone is the truth sufficient for the life of the whole world. Christ renews man at the centre, and then throughout the whole circumference

of his powers and possibilities. Other lights of human kindling illumine but portions of our life, and all go out in death. The life of Christ is the light of men; and there is no phase of our nature, no need of our common humanity, no possibility of our love and hope, which his life does not embrace and purify and irradiate. In one word, Jesus Christ, God with us in our life, is alone adequate to human nature. Shall I not trust myself to the life which meets, at every point, my life? I go along the shore when the sun hangs a burning ball in the hot sky, and the tide is out. Suppose I had come to the shore, at that hour, the first of mortals from the inland country to reach a continent's edge, knowing nothing of the daily pulse-beat of the ocean. I mark the winding shore, curved and broken, and indented, seemingly without law or reason. I notice the outreaching cliffs, and the deep fissures worn into the very face of the rock. I see, also, the withering sea-grasses, and the stretches of parched flats. And while I stand and wonder what means this ragged waste, in which a continent comes to an end, I hear the sound of the approaching sea. I notice the line of foam advancing up the beach; behold! the great ocean, from all its depths, goes forth to meet the shore; the rising waters eddy and play around the headlands and over every rock; the sultriness vanishes before the breeze that comes riding in upon the white-crested waves; and, at length, when the tide is full, I know how the deep answers the shallows, and the ocean was made to fit the shore, and the continent is comprehended in the fulness of the waters in which God caused the dry land to

appear. I know that both sea and land were fitted to each other by the same creative Power. I see the same perfect fitness between Christianity and human nature. Christianity alone meets the whole circumference of human want, flooding all the shore of our being. Your little brooks of philosophy are not enough to cover a single marsh! Out of the deep comes the answer to man's nature. Christianity is the life—the returning tide of life—the ever fresh adaptation, morning and evening, of eternal truth and love to the whole continent of our being. In him was life. In him all fulness dwells. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

If we stand by this text—the life was the light of men—we shall gain thoroughly human ideas of what the Gospel, and the preaching of the Gospel, is intended to be. The real Gospel is God's life through Christ touching our life and making it new. We do not preach the Gospel, therefore, if we are content merely to teach a system of Biblical truths. The prime object of this Bible is not to make men theologians, but to make them Christians, and good Christians. It is not of so much importance that we should be able to justify God's ways toward man, as it is that we should be able to walk ourselves with hearts right toward God, and blameless among men. God's eye, through the Bible, is fixed upon character. The atonement is God's own method of forgiving sin, and restoring sinners, without losing his eternal respect for character—for his own righteousness, and the right living of all the redeemed. We cannot, then, really, or in a Biblical way, preach

Christ crucified, unless, all the while, we keep our eye, also, upon human conduct and character. We are put in charge of the Gospel of the redemption of human life and society. This Gospel, rightly received, is at once the divinest, and the most human thing imaginable; for it is the Gospel of the life—God's life of truth and purity, of sweetness and blessedness, come to earth, dwelling with man, the sufficient power and grace of our life. Christianity is not only, then, the most sacred, but also the most secular thing on earth. It has divine right in the midst of the business of the world. It cannot, without disloyalty to its divinest spirit, be divorced from the common life of man, and sundered from its vital relation to the business, the politics, and the conduct of men in the world. We are sometimes warned against secularizing overmuch our religion. We are disloyal to it if we do not seek to secularize it every day we live. Jesus Christ brought the kingdom of heaven down to the streets of Capernaum. He secularized divinity when he put from him the ceremonial of the Pharisees, and sat at meat with publicans and sinners. God, who is light, shone through his daily life with men. What the Church needs now to do is to bring the Christ, his Spirit and his righteousness, into the streets and the stores, along the lines of commerce, among the interchanges of trade, through the actual relations of society, around the whole circumference of human nature and human life. There is not a solitary question of actual life and conduct before which Christ is not to be preached. And if we do not so confess Christ before men by entering in and possessing every-

thing in his name, then we shall not preach the real historic Christ, but only a theological Christ; and the world is not to be saved by our doctrine of Christ, but by the real presence of Christ bidding its passion be still, casting out its devils, binding up its broken hearts, and healing its iniquities.

This brings us directly to the third and last implication of our text. Only through lives in real sympathy with God in Christ are we to receive the light of the world. I spoke just now of the theological Christ. I did not mean that the mystery of God in Christ is not to be the subject of theological inquiry; God forbid that, in our pulpits, the problems of divinity should not continue to be, as they always have been, the most stimulating, attractive, nay, exciting, subjects of rational inquiry and thought. Indeed, the deep things of God lie ever beneath the surface of our lives. The child will drop his first questions into them. We rock upon their depths in the midst of life's stress and tempest. In the calmer evening-time, old age, as it nears the other shore, still is borne upon the depths of the mystery of the wisdom of God. Every thoughtful man and woman—nay, every thoughtless man and woman, whom life lays hold of with its great *must* of destiny—is compelled, at times, to turn theologian, and to think. To banish theology, then, from our pulpits as not practical, would be eventually to separate religion from life. But what I would insist upon is this: not that we must not theologize, but that we are to learn Christian truth first of all, and best of all, in that school where Jesus came to teach it, viz., the school of real life. The light must be

struck for us from the life. Our best light always is the kindling of the life into truth. It is from the meeting of God's life through Christ with man's life, with our own life, that the light shines. You cannot, by any possibility, know God in Christ simply by argument and much reasoning. You can find out in that way only how little we know, and how the circumference of the mystery around us widens with every increase of science. Through life to knowledge is the Christian way. This supreme law of knowledge through experience, holds both in general of all knowledge, and in particular of our acquaintance with those spiritual truths which are most worth our knowing. Let one or two particulars now answer for all. You say, "I do not understand what the theologians teach concerning the atonement." Well, you may have listened to many sermons upon God's chosen way of forgiving sin, and, as you confess, with little profit; but there is a way of studying that doctrine of the cross by which God's method of reconciliation through Christ may become light to you. Go, study divine forgiveness through a real, persistent, self-sacrificing endeavor to forgive some one who has wronged you. Go, study the means of reconciliation by seeking to forgive and to forget the injury you have suffered. Find out how much must be involved in the forgiveness of sin for a perfect God, who has the righteousness of the whole universe to uphold, by learning what must be suffered—what must be waited for—what cannot be done—what may be done, at least, by unselfish love, by self-respect without self-pride—in restoring either for yourself or for some other a broken human tie, in

reuniting some life-relationship left sundered and bleeding by some cruel sin. Depend upon it, in this real way of life you will learn the doctrine of divine forgiveness as you never knew it before.

And just one more instance. How shall we know, after all, that this world is not hollow-hearted—life fair only on the surface, and dead at heart? Is all happiness superficial—life's brightness only the moment's breaking into light, upon the earth's surface, of forces that in themselves are cold and dark as space; and beneath the blooming surface again nothing but dust and darkness? Who of us has not felt, at times, the temptation to this utter unbelief—nay, to this hunger of heart after unfailing good and for beauty that does not pass from earth with the setting of the sun? We believe in God; but who of us has not felt, at times, the chill of this practical atheism—doubt of good—or, if not doubt, at least a certain heartlessness for life—a silence within us of hope—a certain daze and death of feeling under calamity, or when we stood dumb before death's cold, pitiless eye? To continue in that state would be atheism. A life without hope is a life without God.

How, then, shall we know Him? In part the experience of the soul-want of the living God is life's way toward God. I had almost said that this practical experience of atheism is the beginning of faith. Yet alas! not always is it so; for men may fall back again from trouble and sorrow into the forms of life in the world, and not know God who was so near them. But men also often pass from the discovery of their life's emptiness and need out to a faith in which they can live.

And this passing from darkness into light must always be through right conduct and character. The Christ will show God to us as not unto the world, only as we would live not as the world lives. Go, and follow Jesus in his way of ministry among men, if you would know his Father and your Father. As God has come home to man through the life of Christ, so we are to draw near unto God through the Christian life. Men are never atheists when they are struggling to do some good deed for their fellowmen. Men forget their unbelief in the moments when they face death for country, or dash temptation from them in the kingliness of conscience. Atheists, if there are any, are atheists in the study with their slippers on ; or upon the platform, in the play of reason—not in real life ; not in the great sacrifices of duty ; not in the sublime hours of patriotism ; not in the holy sanctities of life's first love ; not in the moments when we stop from our own eager ambitions to bind up some human wound, or to make a little child happy. Conscience, love, honor, devotion—these are never doubters, never deniers, never without hope and without God ! These are the faithful believers in men's hearts. Our sins are the atheists in our lives.

My text is unspeakably deeper and ampler than any sermon that may be preached upon it. The life is the light. If we will live true, noble, Christlike lives, doubt not God will reveal his truth and his goodness through them ; the endeavor so to live will bring us to Christ and the Father ; the Holy Spirit will come to us ; we shall find words of God in our lives, and at evening-time it shall be light.

III.

ULTIMATES OF KNOWLEDGE AND BEGIN- NINGS OF FAITH.

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."—I JOHN v. 20.

I WISH to place this text, which stands so calmly and so positively at the close of this epistle, over against a common mood of men's minds at the present time, of which I was reminded in a conversation with a friend only the other day. The following tenor of remarks is true to the real state of mind of many thoughtful persons, and it is the duty of the ministers of Christ's Gospel, so far as possible, to bring to the light the real thoughts of men's hearts. That, at least, was what Jesus himself was always doing. I repeat then here, not the words exactly, but the substance of what more than once I have heard, as well as felt, as follows: I do not think life in the Middle Ages was so much inferior to life now; I could almost wish that I had lived then in those ages of universal faith; men knew then what they were here for, and where they were going. They were not troubled with the unrest in which we live, which even Christian believers feel. I would willingly give up railroads and electricity, and the Brooklyn bridge, and all these things,

if I could escape these modern questionings, and have again the restfulness of faith. If I only knew that we make our bodies, and our bodies do not compose us ; if I only knew that there is spirit, and a God, and immortal life ; if I knew ! And so over against this restlessness of mind, deep and earnest, yet unquiet also as the sea, over which every passing wind has power, and the spirits of doubt moan, I would place this firm, exalted text, which stands at the close of a whole range of sublime convictions : " We know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

How can we now reach such heights of assurance as are marked by these words of St. John ?

The way indeed stands open back to the Middle Ages and their kind of faith for any who wish to follow it. They have only to join the Roman Catholic Church. And some have been driven by the spirit of unrest, haunting modern life, back into the medieval repose of Catholicism. We have no such authority up to which, when our souls are frightened, we can run for shelter. Protestantism, having once let loose the spirit of free inquiry, is bound to see all questions of faith and life freely and honestly through. Every interrogation-point which can be raised, has a right to stand up before our pulpits. Every question of life has a right to come and sit in the pews of a Protestant Church. We must know what we believe. We must teach our children no obedience less noble than obedience to truth. Congregationalism, least of all, can have place for any pope.

I shall proceed, then, to indicate the chief steps in a

way which leads toward the free yet restful confidence of our text. I shall give convictions and conclusions rather than reasonings; the arguments would fill volumes, but the line of conclusions may be traced in a single sermon. First of all, we need to go straight through our own experiences, thoughts, and questionings, until we find ourselves facing the ultimates of our life and knowledge. There are certain last things of human experience which we may reach, and beyond which we can go no farther. These I call ultimates of life and knowledge. Upon these, having done all, we may stand. The way for us to faith cannot be the way back to medieval authority, but it is back to these great ultimates of the human soul and human history. Many a young man comes now-a-days to church, if he comes at all, in what I may call a state of mental reserve; and this reserved state of mind, in which many listen respectfully to the Gospel, is one of the real practical hindrances to clear, bright discipleship at the present time. It hinders the progress of the Church as the fogs of late have hindered navigation. And storms and breakers are not always needed, only the fog is enough oftentimes to make castaways. Men in what I have just called this state of mental reserve listen to the great commandments of the Gospel,—repent, believe, confess Christ before men,—and while not intentionally or deliberately rejecting them, they receive them and lose sight of them in this great fog-bank of mental uncertainty which lies in their minds all around the horizons of present and near duties. Most of these persons have not studied very far into religious questions; many have not cared to go quietly searching

through their own uncertainties. They simply sit back, in comfortable reserve from the preacher of the duty of a Christian profession, saying to themselves, "I do not know; perhaps I ought; but there is now so much uncertainty about everything that we used to believe; very probably what the preacher says may be so; but my friend the professor, or the doctor, or my neighbor who is a good deal of a scholar does not believe these things; and, when I think of it, there are a great many doctrines taught in the Bible which I do not understand. I keep up the respectable habits of religion. I think the churches, on the whole, are useful for society, and I do not really want to believe in nothing." Back, then, let us force ourselves to the ultimates of our life! Back in all honesty and urgency let us go, until we face "the flaming bounds of the universe!" Let us not stop with any disputes by the way, or at any half-way resting-places. If I can find firm footing upon the ultimate facts of experience, then I can look out upon the sea of religious contentions, as the man who has gained the shore looks back upon the waves. If I have Apostolic standing upon the great facts of God's work on earth, I can have also Apostolic freedom and fearlessness whatever winds may be astir.

I find four ultimates, then, upon which to stand; four fundamentals of human life and knowledge from which to survey all passing clouds and turmoil.

One of these ultimates—the one nearest to the common sense of mankind, and which I only need to mention—is the final fact that there is some all-embracing Power in the universe. This is the last word which the

senses, and the science of the senses, have to speak to us—force. There is one comprehensive sum of energy, one final fact of force, in the world. But when I look this physical ultimate of things in the face, and ask what it is, or how I have learned to give this name of power to it; then I find myself standing before a second ultimate of knowledge. That is the fact of intelligence. I cannot, in my thought, go before or behind that last fact of mind, and reason compels me to go up to it and admit it; there is mind above matter; there is intelligence running through things. Indeed, the universe seems to be steeped in thought. Everywhere law is a fact of reason in things. The more thoroughly men master the nature of matter, the nearer they seem to come out into the presence of something unseen and spiritual. I do not intend, at this point, to turn aside into an argument with materialism; I am simply asserting that as matter of fact, however we may reason about it, every man of us does believe in his own rational self; and, knowing himself to be, does find the final fact of intelligence in the nature of things. Upon the shores, then, of this restless mystery of our life are standing, calm and eternal, these two ultimates of all knowledge, Power and Reason, Intelligence and Force;—and they stand bound together—an intelligent Power, a Force of Mind in things.

But there is another line of facts in our common experience, the end of which is not reached in these ultimates of science and philosophy. There is another direction of human life whose terminus I must seek. The familiar facts are these. You and I had not merely

a cause for our existence ; I had a mother, and you had before you a fact of love in the mother who gave you birth. Your infancy was cradled in another element than the forces of nature, or the protecting power of some intelligence. You were cradled in love ; and that love, which was your mother, is a fact of life as true and real, and, perhaps, infinitely deeper in its significance, than anything you have ever learned since through your eyes from the appearance of nature. And that fact of love in which you were born, nay, in which the veriest heathen child is born, is not a passing, changing, temporal thing. It is one of the permanent facts of the creation. It is persistent as any force of nature. It is an elemental power of your being. Love breathes through life, and pervades history. It is the deathless heart of our mortality. Moreover, this fact of love in which our being is cradled, and in which, as in our true element, man finds himself, has in it law and empire. It introduces into our lives a commanding law. We know the law of love, and we know it as a law above nature and death. In obedience to this supreme authority men will even dare to die. There are, then, for us such realities as love, devotion, duty. The child, growing out of its mother's arms, finds that from the bosom of love it has brought to life a sense of duty. The moral law becomes a felt omnipresence to us. It is always with us, a joy to us when we do well, a terror at our hearts when we do evil. It was before us and shall be after us. At the end of a large part of our experience stands, then, this final fact of moral law. Only this is no mere commandment or restraint. It is rich

and beautiful and bright, as well as grand and commanding. It is the ultimate of what is best and happiest, as well as dutiful, in life. It is the ultimate of all the familiar, sacred facts of motherhood and fatherhood, of obedience and trust, of helpfulness and affection, of all, in short, that makes man's life worth living; it is, in one word, the ultimate law of love.

And with this it might seem as though I had gone around the compass of our being, and said all that can be said of the last facts of our lives. But I have not. There is another ultimate before which I stand. There is another last fact of this world, which not only cannot be resolved into anything simpler than itself, and with which, therefore, we must rest, but which, also, is itself the truth abiding as the light of day over these fundamental facts of our knowledge. It is the illumination of man's whole life. I refer, of course, to the character of Jesus Christ. The Person of the Christ is the ultimate fact of light in the history of man.

We cannot resolve the character of Jesus into anything before itself. We cannot explain him by anything else in history. We cannot go beyond Christ in order to understand him. He is himself, alone among men, unique, original, most unlike man in those very moments and experiences when he is also most human; he is, in one word, an ultimate fact of God in the world, up to which the eyes of all the generations look, and beyond whom we cannot go. Who shall declare his generation?

A few moments' reflection will suffice to make plain how much is meant in this recognition of Jesus Christ as

the final fact not to be explained by any others in human history. It is easy enough to explain the characters of men like ourselves. Our family-history gives an intelligible and sufficient basis for our personalities. We have our ancestors in ourselves. And we see ourselves in our children. Now the Gospels give two books of the genealogies of Jesus Christ. There are long lists of names carefully recorded, as the Jews were wont to do, and running back for generations. Read that family-record book; as you run down through those names, Abraham, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Zerubbabel, and the later ancestors, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Joseph, would you think you were coming nearer, do you begin to expect Jesus who is called Christ? Who ever thought of explaining the Son of man by these Jewish genealogies? The more definite we make the comparison between Jesus and men, the more striking appears his final unaccountableness upon the ordinary principles and by the common laws of human descent. We can bring all human genius into organic line with its ancestry, or into spiritual unity with its nationality or age. Take, for example, our own Emerson. His was a marked individual genius; yet his biographers recognize in it the flowering of several generations of genuine New England characters. Emerson's striking picture of his aunt might almost serve as a frontispiece to his own life. Or, to go back in history, Rome and the Cæsar explain each the other. Human nature in Greece, vexed by the sophists, must give birth both to an Aristotle and a Socrates. These two types of mind are constantly reproduced. And the Buddha is the incarnation of the

Oriental mind. But Jesus is something more than Judea incarnate. Jesus is something unknown on earth before incarnated in a most human life. He was in this world, but not of it. He was the fulfillment of the history of God in Israel, yet he was not the product of his times. There is something elemental about his power; we can resolve his spirit into nothing else. He chose to call himself, not a Hebrew of the Hebrews, not a Greek of the Gentiles, but simply and solely the Son of man. And we can find no better name for him. He stands in the midst of history simply and solely himself—the man, the Son of man. He is for us an ultimate fact, then, unaccounted for by the lives of other men, unaccountable except by himself; as much as any element of nature is an original thing not to be explained by anything else that is made, so is the character of Jesus Christ elemental in history, the ultimate fact of God's presence with man. Observe, I am simply asserting now what I believe to be the solid fact, and I am not at present using the tests and arguments by means of which it may be made apparent that in the character of Jesus Christ we do reach a final spiritual fact. The reasons for this belief might be expanded into volumes, but they are not necessary to one who would look straight at the last realities of things. The simple Gospels, as we have them, and without any critical discussions, are sufficient to reveal a character mirrored in these narratives which they did not originate, any more than the glass originates the sun reflected in it. The Gospels themselves, without any concern about who wrote them, or the many problems incidentally suggested by them, are enough to reveal the

presence in this world of a Being who was not of this world, and whom the history of this earth does not explain. I go farther and say, even if you should break the Bible to pieces, the evidence of the ultimate spiritual personality of Jesus the Christ would not be destroyed. Break the glass to pieces, and you will not rid yourself of the evidence of the sun which shone in it. Still every fragment and bit of glass at your feet will throw its beam of light up into your eye. The critics cannot destroy the evidence of the Christ in the Scriptures. Neither does it explain the light to analyze carefully the glass, or to turn it over and see what is behind it. It is well to know all we can possibly learn concerning the way in which the Bible came to pass, and he is no friend of faith who would stop any inquisitive scholar from the most thorough criticism of the Scriptures. But the thing which the world has seen, and will continue to behold, is the light from above in the Christ of the Scriptures.

No process of history, or theory of the Bible, or knowledge of the motley times in which Jesus came preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven, does account for the person, or comprehend the work of Jesus Christ. And Christianity, the ever present Scripture of Christ's life and power, itself is the evidence still before our eyes of his Person and presence, even as the first disciples beheld it, and marvelled, and worshipped before him.

If any one wishes to examine further into this matter, and to convince himself whether this indeed be so, let me make to him one suggestion. Begin anew the study of Jesus' character with the aspects of it which come nearest to us and are most familiar to your own experience of

men. Begin not by looking away to the heights of his mystery of being, but with the lesser scenes and minor incidents of his life—the easier slopes and lower levels of his greatness. Let the miracles pass at first. Leave out of thought for the moment the narratives of the nativity, and the resurrection; approach Christ in the midst of his daily intercourse, in the most common and human incidents of his work. You will find something you never found before even in those. You will see something never seen on earth before even in those. The minor characteristics of Jesus are impressed with divinity. The little things of his human friendships are not of this world. The more imitable features of his character have still upon them a heavenly light. In his nearest approach to the common levels of our lives Jesus is still more than man.

If we begin thus with the minor characteristics and little daily things of Jesus' life, and find even in these something beyond us all; then when we read of the miracles, they seem to fall into harmony with the man and his power; and the beginning and the end of his life, which are contrary to all our experience of other men, seem to be perfectly in accordance with our experience of Jesus himself. So his whole life from beginning to end seems to be a harmony of God with men. It is a higher evolution than our lives. It can be understood only by itself. It is the final fact, the moral and spiritual ultimate of human history.

Now, then, such being the fundamental facts of our knowledge—the ultimates of human experience—it is perfectly legitimate for us to build upon them; and any

man who wishes to build his life upon the rock, and not upon the sands, will build upon them. A Power not ourselves upon which we are dependent,—a first intelligence and love, source of all our reason and life of our heart,—and Jesus Christ, the final proof of God with us and for us,—such are the elemental realities upon which our souls should rest. He who stands upon these divine facts in the creation and in history shall not be confounded. I know what it is to feel the foundations of all things sacred and true slipping from beneath one's feet. Who that has lived since the fathers fell asleep has not known this? Who has not had moments at least of longing for the assurance of faith? Happy are we, if we have learned what are the fundamentals of our life; what are the true beginnings of knowledge! Happy, if we have learned the lesson at once of humility, of wisdom, and of faith, and can plant our feet upon the firm, primal, divine facts of things, even while we are learning that we often do not understand, and can not answer life's daily question: How can these things be? And it is our duty not to be driven from the elemental facts of God and Christ in the creation and in history simply by our vain imaginations as to how these things can be. My friends, the real difficulty with your faith and mine is usually not, as we are pleased to say, with our superior reasons, or our wise understandings; it is with our imaginations. It is not because men can reason God out of his own universe successfully, but because they cannot imagine what God is, and is like, can give him no form and mode of being in their thoughts, that they can ever teach themselves to deny God's existence.

No one would ever think of denying there is a God, if he could only imagine what God is like. It is not because nature in our hearts does not believe in our own immortality, but because we cannot conceive of the manner of existence after death, that we are content to live as though this little bustle of a world were all of God's good providence for us. It is because it doth not yet appear what we shall be, that we doubt the future, and live as though this present were all. It is not the human reason, but the imagination, which is the sceptic. Hence, then, if we would reach something of John's assurance—this is the true God and eternal life—we must give heed to the word of warning which seems at first thought to stand disconnected from the rest of this text, but which is very necessary to it: Little children, keep yourselves from idols. That means for us,—You, who in the childlike spirit do rest upon these constant, home-like facts of God and Christ with men, keep yourselves from all vain forms and imaginations of your hearts. It is of the essence of idolatry really to lose faith in the endeavor to give form and imagined substance to things unseen and eternal. The heathen idolatry was one foolish imagination of divine things. Man betrayed his own spiritual faith by trying to give it visible form. The idols were often sensual and gross imaginations of God. So faith died at its own altars. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Plant your feet upon the fundamental facts of God and the Gospel; do not lose your faith in trying to give the unseen realities form and shape in your own vain imaginations. We know that the divine essentials are; we do not, and cannot con-

ceive how they are. Over against Nicodemus' question, How? Jesus put simply his spiritual affirmations that these spiritual births, and these heavenly truths, must be and are. We do know the divine elements of our life and history, and our immortality, though no master among us can tell us how these things can be. Still Jesus stands before us answering life's every question with his "Verily, verily, I say unto you." There may be some man here who is kept from his own proper faith in the divine assertions of the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven, simply because he cannot free himself from the difficulties of his own imagination, and is not willing to believe in realities, in the most fundamental and final realities of experience, because they refuse to take form and visibility to his understanding. He will believe in God when he can see him like an idol. He will believe in his own soul when he can fashion a mode of understanding it. He will act upon his own immortality when he can grasp some tangible conception of it. When men say they will believe what they can understand, they may mean,—we would believe if we had some forms or idols upon which our faith could lay hands. "This is the true God and eternal life; little children, keep yourselves from idols,"—from the idols of our own desires; from the idols of our own imaginations; from the idols of tradition and the schools. We need now for our own faith, and for the salvation of the faith of the world a theology without idols; a Church without idols; and everywhere among Christians a childlikeness of heart before God, kept from the love of the fashion and forms of this world, which is idolatry.

IV.

THE DIFFICULTY OF NOT BELIEVING.

"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"—GAL. iv. 9.

I HAVE been thinking how difficult it would be for us not to be Christians. It is hard, we say, to have faith; but do we realize what a task a man imposes upon himself if he attempts to live without faith? I know a man who commenced deliberately to unload himself, as he expressed it, of the beliefs which he had accumulated in his education. One belief after another he threw overboard. He sought to rid himself of everything which did not seem to him necessary to his very life. At last he came to one belief where he was convinced that he must stop. He must have a God. To abandon that faith would have been to him, not throwing over the cargo, but giving up the ship. That one belief he kept because it seemed to him to belong to the make of his own soul. To have gone beyond that point in divesting himself of his inherited beliefs would have been to tear out an integral part of himself. Is it really possible for any sincere man to live life through without reaching some point beyond which unbelief would be not merely the giving up another belief, but a cutting into the quick of the soul? Is not some faith one of

the first vital necessities of the human reason and heart?

I wish, then, this morning, to invert a very common way of reasoning about religion among men. Instead of treating a religious faith as though it were a good thing to be added to a man's moral capital in life, I would raise the question rather, whether a man will have capital enough for life left if he lets a Christian faith go from him? Instead of dwelling upon the difficulties in the way of a positive Christian faith, I would consider whether we shall not have to believe a great many things hard to receive, if we do not trust the Lord Jesus? Men of the world will sometimes say to devout Christians, "We cannot believe so many things as you do; we do not know about these matters of faith." I want to reverse the process, and to show how many things very hard to credit one must believe in order not to be a Christian.

In reversing thus the ordinary reasoning of men with regard to the truths of religion, we follow the direction of the question which the Apostle Paul put to the Galatians. Evidently it seemed the strangest thing in the world to him that any persons to whom Christ had been preached, could think of living on this earth, from which Jesus had ascended, without a Christian faith. The hardest thing for the Apostle was, not to keep his faith in the risen Lord, but to conceive how any one to whom the Gospel had come, should ever dream of doing again without it. He asks the Galatians, in sincere astonishment: But now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again

to the weak and beggarly rudiments whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again?

Let us consider how many vital things a man must give up in order not to be a Christian, first, in regard to faith in general, and then, more particularly, with regard to some of the chief elements of the Christian life.

First, in order not to have faith, one must vacate a considerable portion of his own mental experience. There is a large part of every man's self-consciousness which is bound up with faith in realities beyond this present world of sights and sounds. It would be almost an impossible task for us to disentangle all faith in things divine and eternal from the elements of our self-consciousness. Our reasons have their roots in the divine. If these primal beliefs in God and immortality were simply results of argument, we might reason ourselves out of them; but they are elements, rather, of our rational and conscious life, so that we cannot separate them wholly from ourselves. Atheists, after all, can only make believe not to believe. These elementary spiritual faiths are not colors laid on our life; they are among the threads of which life itself is woven, inseparable from our self-consciousness. The man, therefore, who proposes not to have any faith, sets before himself the difficult task of unraveling his own life, and unmaking his own rational soul. Equally difficult would it prove for any man to make good, in his own mind, the boast which shallow men sometimes utter, "I will believe only what I can understand." As matter of fact every man does believe vastly more than he, or any one else on the face of the earth, ever

understood. You believe in oxygen, hydrogen, electricity, and the ultimate particles and forces of matter. You do not understand them any more than you understand what the wings of angels may be made of. All thought, after a few scientific measurements and experimental steps, leads straight out into the divine and eternal mystery in which our whole world of knowledge lies ensphered. Every man carries about in himself a world of being which he knows but in part. The common principles upon which men act every day in their business and their pleasures, spring directly out of some mental or moral fact which we take for granted. No man can walk down to his office in the morning without believing, at least, in a creed as long as this: I have the power to will that I will go; I have power so to co-ordinate my intangible thoughts and desires with certain so-called nerve-currents, and a whole scheme and mechanism of physical forces, that I shall find myself walking, not at hap-hazard, but in a self-determined course, to the destination which I saw in my mind when I proposed to myself to start. And all this is a creed a great deal longer than any of us understand. Yet you walk by it, and do your business by it. Think, also, of those larger, outlying regions of our mental consciousness—those great shadow-lands out of which our conscious thoughts and feelings emerge. Our best thoughts, which minister most to our life and love, come to us like the angels that appeared by the patriarch's tent—we know not from whence or how; we know only that they are with us, and in their conversation life seems a holy and a happy thing. Men say they will conduct their

lives only under the light of perfectly comprehensible and clear ideas. Very well; but that portion of your thoughts which to you is clear as noon-day, like the noon-day, has also before it, and after it, its morning and its evening—its hour of dim, uncertain dawn, and its setting again in the universal mystery. I say, then, not to delay longer with illustrations of this point, that a man who tries to sail across this life to the other unknown shore without faith has a much more serious task to perform upon himself than simply to unload himself of so many accumulated beliefs; he may throw overboard human traditions, but to get rid of faith he cannot stop with the cargo; he will have to hew at the knees of the ship; in fact, he will have to take out the keel: for all our knowledge, and all our life, so richly furnished, are built up on faith, as the ship is built into the keel.

There is another tremendously present thing which would have to be put away from us in order that we might be able to live without faith, and that is the divine imperative of conscience. Something higher and better than we lays hold of us in conscience. This visible world, with its present kingdoms, vanishes before the invisible majesty of conscience. Though men mock conscience, and put it in chains, and leave it dishonored and forgotten in darkness, they are not safe from it; it will prove "a moral Samson;" and, while they make merry and feast, its hour shall surely come, and conscience, derided and put to shame, shall prove its strength, and triumph in the ruins of the evil soul.

There are several other vital elements which must be

sacrificed in the vain effort to live without faith. One will have to leave out some of the most marked experiences of his life. The simple fact is, that the invisible powers are constantly laying hold of the life of man in the world. It would be an impossible task for us to account wholly for our own lives simply and solely upon natural causes. Super-sensible influences do mingle and blend with the sensible; providences are realities of human experience. Often we may have been able to single out and account for the several natural agencies in some affair of our own lives; we can name and number the agents who brought about the event; but who brought the agents together? What directing goodness combined their action in our behalf? Who has *timed*, often so happily for us, the events of our lives? The mechanism of the clock accounts for everything except the time it keeps. Who has regulated its motions? Who has set its hands together on the hour? Who has timed the clock? There is signal proof of providence in our lives in the frequent happy timing of events for us. So our whole human history was timed for the hour of the Christ. Nature may have been set to strike the alarm of miracles at the appointed hour of Christ's advent. At least history throughout has been timed to redemption. A man, then, must believe that these providential times and seasons in his own life, as well as upon the larger scale of history, are accidental and meaningless, if he is to have any success in the attempt not to have faith like a Christian. Then, again, although one succeeds for a while in letting all these things go from his thoughts, the powers of the world

to come will quietly lie in wait for him, and suddenly, perhaps, break in upon his life. It may be all going smoothly with him; he need take no thought of the other world around this little visible earth; his mind is wholly in his business, and he is forgetting all of himself that cannot be turned into dollars and cents; but, unexpectedly, a great chasm opens in his pleasant path. The little child running before him has disappeared in death's unutterable void; the wife walking his smooth life with him is no more by his side. Death is a sudden breaking of the world to come in upon this present world. A man may possibly look upon the face of death without feeling one throb of faith; but to do that he must stop the beating of his own heart.

To go on through life beside that chasm of death, walking alone henceforth along the brink of that precipice, where the life which yesterday went hand in hand with ours suddenly disappeared, and was lost,—how can we live with this silence and depth of death's mystery ever at our right hand, unless we can walk by faith?—unless we believe in a life beyond the mystery and the silence, into which the soul of man, full of forces of thought and love, vanishes, dropping its garment of mortality only in the path at our feet? Our souls, also, some day, shall take wing and fly away.

There is another side of our experience, which I will just mention, from which one must cut himself loose, if he would have any success in not belonging to a Christian world; he must break off his fellowship with the truest and best life of humanity. The fact here in point is, that very much as we are born into a human society, and

have the birthright of citizenship in our country ; so we are born also into a kingdom of souls, and have a higher citizenship in the spiritual realm. The history of man is not merely, nor chiefly, political ; it is religious. The history of the kingdom of redemption is the paramount part of human history. Other history, what we call profane history, is the form and shaping of events only ; the substance of history is its spiritual progress ; the issue of it, and the main thing in it all along, is redemption. If, then, one wants not to be a Christian believer, a citizen of a world becoming Christian, he will have to begin by denying himself a goodly fellowship. The worldling will be obliged to keep his little venture of a life close to the material side, this tangible shore of things, in the shallow eddies and side-currents, not out in the deeper currents of events, in the main movement of history, where go the strong and the noble who have committed their lives wholly to God's purpose which beneath all flows steadily on toward the fulness of the eternal redemption. Not to let one's self be carried on by a Christian faith is to throw one's life out of the best and purest, and the most powerful sympathy and life of humanity. One must deny the brightest and happiest side of this present world if he would deny the Christian faith of the world.

Let us consider further how much one will have to believe in order not to be a Christian, in relation to some particulars of the Christian life. One vital element of the Christian life is trust in the goodness of the heavenly Father. We do not conceal from ourselves, we cannot, that this is a trust written often across the

face of events in our lives which seem to contradict it. As Christians we believe in the sunny side, that is, in the divine side, of everything. We say it is only our present position in the shadow, or under some cloud, which prevents our seeing the bright and eternal side of it. Wait, and we shall see the goodness of the Lord.

We were sailing one afternoon with the broken coast of Maine in the distance projecting upon our horizon. A black thunder-cloud gathered in shore over the hill-tops. We could see the play of the lightnings, and the waters breaking from the cloud. That was all that the villagers and the fishermen along the shore could have seen. But we, at our distance, beheld also the untroubled sun in the clear sky above ; its beams struck the edges of that heavy mass of vapors, and above the darkness and the lightnings we could see the upper side of the cloud turn to gold ; and, even while it was blackness and fear to those below, its pinnacles and towers were shining before our eyes like the city of God descending from heaven. Thus Christian faith beholds also the heavenly side of this world's storm and darkness. You tell me it is hard to keep such faith. Yes, it is hard. There must be the victory of faith overcoming the world. But did you ever sit down and recount what hard things you must believe, and how many, in order not to have anything of Jesus' faith in the Father ? Have you ever counted the cost of the sacrifice which you must make to give up even the little faith of a disciple ? Think of it. In order not to believe in the goodness of God, you must begin by believing against every instinct of life and health in you that it would have been better for you never to

have been born ; that the first glad laughter of childhood is false to the heart of things ; that every ray of joy which may have come to earth is meaningless and vain ; that human happiness is an exquisite mockery of malevolence devised to make us in the end more conscious of misery ; that man was made for sickness, and health is the accident ; that life was invented on purpose for the pain of death ; that the most noble powers of the mind are the most ingenious devices of the adversary ; that memory was contrived as an instrument of human torture ; that imagination has its highest use in bringing us all our lives under the bondage of fear ; that our human hearts, in short, were made capable of love and the pure delights of unselfish friendship, simply that by means of them death might torment us ; and that all this world of beauty wears every fresh morning an expression of happiness, and at evening a smile of peace, only that those who come nearest nature's heart may be of all men the most deceived and the most miserable ! These things, and more like these, a man must believe, if he would not cherish the faith of Jesus in our heavenly Father.

Take as another instance the Christian belief in our personal sinfulness and need of forgiveness. How many thoughts of the heart must one forget not to believe that ? Beloved, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. He who makes light of the fact of sin, who seeks to empty of its convincing power our heart-consciousness of sin, may ask us to believe anything else that he pleases ; for if a man can really believe that he is sinless, and in no need of a divine forgiveness and help, nothing else could be difficult for him to credit.

I pass to two other examples. Men say it is hard to believe in an atonement. Perhaps it may be in some of our human philosophies of God's method of reconciling the world; but not to believe in Jesus' word that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sin, would require us to believe some things about God which it would be very hard for us to hold of the Creator of our hearts. Even a human government would be incomplete unless, in some hand, there should be lodged some power of pardon. Not to believe in the authority of God himself over the execution of his own law is to believe that God's government is not so perfect as man's. Or, to take the subject up to a higher plane, where I much prefer to study it, our human love can sometimes find for itself a way of forgiveness which it will follow without dimming its own purity, or losing its own self-respect, though it be for it a way of tears. To believe, then, that the God of love can find no way of atonement for sin, though it be the way of the Cross, is to believe that man's heart is diviner than God's. Yes, to recognize and praise human charity, forgiveness, and grace; to own the power of human love to raise the fallen, and to give the life of the strong and the pure for the sinful and the weak; and then not to believe that God can do the same, and will, and that, not after the measure of our human imperfection, but according to his infinite goodness, and in his own perfect and complete way of the Cross—this faith, I say, in man's power of forgiveness, together with such faithlessness in God's work of forgiving the sin of the world, is an inconsistency of moral reasoning and a denial of

all divine revelation. But he who will not believe in the Gospel of forgiveness, if he believes at all in God, must set himself to solve this contradiction—he gives up a Christian faith only to take upon himself a belief about God too monstrous for the human heart to keep.

The other remaining point which I will mention is the Christian belief in the last judgment. In a similar manner it may be shown that if we would rid ourselves of that belief, we must fortify ourselves against it with a great mass of beliefs difficult for us to receive. As Christians, we may hold that a God of justice and love, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will deal according to his full divine perfection with every soul of man, and that all must appear at last before the same judgment-seat, the judgment-seat of Christ. We must believe that God's government of the world is not two systems—a system of nature and a system of grace, each complete in itself, and each capable of running on by itself forever, to the eternal satisfaction of the Father of all. God has, we believe, one system for all souls—the system for which nature is preparatory, the final system of his grace. All must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Knowing that Christ is to be the Judge of all men, as Christian believers we can postpone any questions about the judgment-day which may be asked, but not answered now, until his perfect will shall be made plain; meanwhile telling to one another, if we please, our own speculations as the child's guesses concerning the Father's way and wisdom, and refusing to allow any man to overburden our Christian faith with his earthly imaginations and temporal logic of eternity. But surely

everything in this world would be left at loose ends, and all our instincts of justice, righteousness, and love thrown into confusion, if we should attempt to wrench the substance of this Christian faith in the judgment to come from our experience of this present life. Not to believe in it requires a great task of reason and conscience; for then one must believe that there is no moral order, as there is plainly a natural order of things; one must then believe that the one constant undertone of justice in man's consciousness is a false note of life; that the first laws of things are but principles of eternal discord; that man's whole moral life and history, in short, is meaningless and worthless. You say it is a terrible thing to believe in the judgment to come; yes, but it is a more fearful thing not to believe in it.

Not to prolong these illustrations of my argument, I want to put one or two thoughts before you in conclusion. The man of the world usually does not live consistently up to his own creed. Unbelief saves itself from practical contempt by really living on more faith than it allows. It is said that as Christians we do not live up to our own faith, and we do not. It would be a happier world if we did. We should be better men if we did. Every good work would prosper, and this would be the grandest missionary age of Christian history, if we did. If all the churches should live up to the edges even of the faith of the Son of God, jealousies and unseemly strife among brethren would cease; peace and righteousness would abound, love would reign in liberty, if the world were really Christian, as so much of it is becoming nominally Christian. Nominally Christian even, it is a better world

than it ever was before ; Christianity fully realized will be this earth's millenium. But what if unbelief should live up to its creed ? Inconsistent Christendom is a vast improvement over consistent paganism. Men say, Let Christians be honest in living their faiths. May God help us so to do ! But let us be thankful that worldliness does not, and by God's grace cannot, live out to the honest end its own creed. Let us be thankful that it is not so easy for men to rob themselves of all faith in divine things, and live as though there were no God, and no Christ, and no hereafter. Let us be thankful that God in his providence and grace does make the short creed of the atheist the most difficult of all creeds to subscribe honestly to, and a consistently worldly life of all lives the most impossible and wretched. But right here lies the real difficulty with many of us. The creed of the world, though it does require us to believe a great many things hard to receive, is an indecisive creed which does not demand of those who profess it constant and consistent effort to live up to it. The creed of the world is yea and nay ; the creed of the Christ is one constant spiritual affirmation ;—In him, says the Apostle, was yea. Christian faith is a will to do God's will. It is to do the truth. It does require decision and confession of Christ. It requires daily watchfulness and growth of soul in those who will live by it. Hence many prefer to stay under the hard terms of the world's creed which costs them at least no great decision, self-denial, or conversion, in order to submit to it. Nevertheless, they who do come to Jesus, and take up their lives in his creed of trust and love, although they give up all to fol-

low him, find his service easy and his burden light. As our text puts it, they were in bondage to them which by nature are no gods; for the gods of this world are no gods; there is no truth or reality in them; worldliness is idolatry, and the creed of worldliness is superstition—the worship, that is, of forms of good, not the possession of the substance of things hoped for; but now as Christians they “have come to know God;” all their experience of life grows more and more into their Christian knowledge of God; or rather they have come “to be known of God;” for God is before us in everything; we are first known of him, and we then recognize him in our own thoughts and lives; we love him because he first loved us; he is first before us, forgiving the sin of the world, and then we know that we are forgiven;—now that as Christians we have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, how can any of us turn back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments—the enslaving beliefs of this world, or desire to be in bondage over again? Let others stumble through life as they may with nothing but the world’s inharmonious creed in their hearts, and no thought or plan of life reaching out beyond these earthly horizons into the sunny distance of eternity; as for us, we will walk in the liberty of Christ, finding his creed as we go down through the years to be the harmony of all true words and happy voices, and a song in the heart in the night of death.

V.

JESUS' VIEW OF LIFE.

"According to Christ Jesus."—ROMANS xv. 5.

You have felt often a strange fascination as you have stood looking out upon the open sea. A wave flashing far out in the sunshine, the depths breaking into a moment's foam at your feet; the strong voice of the rising tide and the moan of the receding waters; the restless motion, the deeper peace; the vastness, the power, the vague, boundless distance in which sea and sky run together and are lost,—all held you to the spot as though you were in an infinite presence, and stirred within you thoughts for which you had no words. But there is one object which moves with still deeper power, and holds with more potent fascination the man who has eyes to look upon it, and a soul to echo to it; and that is the mystery of human life. When a man stands looking into a sea of human faces, he is in the presence of what power, and vastness of possibilities, and deep things of God! When a man stands looking, as I do now, into the faces of his fellow-men, he stands before what worlds of thought, and histories of souls, and powers of endless life! Behind every eye into which he looks is an immortal soul! Beneath every face is veiled a deathless spirit! We do not know the life before us. We cannot know it. It is too great and boundless.

Even the few circles of human histories which we think we have measured and known—our personal acquaintances—sweep out beyond our view into the hereafter. And even within the lines of our present experience of the world, what we know of it is but little of the life and thought, the care and pain, the love and sorrow, in the midst of which we dwell. When we stand before real life ; when we think of what it is ; when in quick succession we let the faces of those whom we have known pass before us, each with its own story or hope ; when we listen and hear coming to us from far and near life's many voices—its laughter and its tragedies, its loud ambitions and its prayers for peace, its daily cries of want and Babel of confusions ; we can hardly endure thinking of its burden and its mystery ; we turn for relief to our present duty, or the little thing of the moment's occupation, putting away from us the thought of what is our life. If any one of us could really see and know, as we believe God sees and knows, the lives of a single company of human beings—such as I am now looking upon—with all that is involved in those lives—their past, their present, their future, all the lives of others knit together, or torn from theirs, and the eternal possibilities in those human souls, I do not believe our human sympathies could contain such revelations. The Scripture tells us that no man can see God and live. Perhaps no one of us could see man even, as God sees him, and not be overpowered by the disclosure of sin, and suffering, and need, of love, and grace, and hope. The novelist holds up before us a little of this complex, boundless whole of life, and our sympathies are stirred

to the depths by a vivid picture of a fragment of it. But there will always be need of the novelist with his eye for life, because the story of life is too great ever to be told. The philosopher stands coolly looking over the tides of human affairs, seeking to determine their metes and bounds, but what are his statistics to life? Real life in its laughter and its woes remains larger and deeper than all our philosophy of it. We have not succeeded in reducing so much as the little life of the child of yesterday to a science—still less the soul of a man. It escapes our definitions. We cannot measure a life. You think that you will hold a whole system of divinity in your iron logic; I ask you to comprehend the life of a little child in your thought of it. But what then? Must I remain simply a perplexed spectator of life, as experience grows, becoming indifferent to this whirl and confusion of things which I cannot alter or even understand? Or must I plunge into the world as it goes, seizing what I can, keeping on the surface for my passing hour, thoughtless of what has been before or may be after me? Or, at best, must I be content with this little eddy of time in which I find myself, taking as easily as I can the motion of things around me, being satisfied with what I have, living as long and as pleasantly as I may until the bright bubble of my home also breaks into the great all, and life flows on as before without me and mine.

My friends, I have been trying thus to put into words thoughts and feelings which often do come to us half consciously, half intelligibly, numbing sometimes our hearts, or shadowing us for moments until we break

away from them in some careless laughter, or turn to recover our strength of purpose in our work in the world. Often as we have listened, while some friend has quietly told us of stories of life which were fraught with strangeness, or we have seen some sudden disclosure of the evils of life waiting around us, or our own past has come like a dream before us, we have felt this question asking itself in our hearts,—What is your life? And we have thought, like the Apostle, of the vapor gathered out of the viewless air, catching a moment's light, and as quickly vanishing whence it came. Or a single word, a moment's quick glance may have disclosed to us some hidden care or anxiety beneath some pleasant surface of a life. I have looked out at sea and watched for many minutes the calm, unbroken surface of the water. And then, where all seemed safe and sunny, a slight roll of the tide revealed what only one who happened to be looking just at that moment would have noticed, a sunken reef, broken and tangled with seaweed—a point of restlessness always there for the waters to vex themselves over. We have such glimpses at times, if we are observant, even into lives which, for the most part, seem undisturbed and bright. And though one tries to hold at arm's length from him all feeling for life, some little thing may bring it upon him unawares. Men and women and children are not so many volumes of physiology; they are bundles of life feeling themselves in every nerve; they are not automaton, however mechanical their habits of life may become; and the only thing which can take all color of sentiment and sympathy for life out of human hearts is death. I take

it for granted, then, that we, all of us, as we have listened to stories of real life, or entered for moments of sympathy, at least, into other people's minds and moods, have felt coming over us this wonder and awe, and sense of strangeness of life. We have felt, if we have not said, What does it all mean? What is it worth? How shall people live? Is there any way of life perfect and sufficient for all? Or must we go stumbling about among things, ourselves but accidents of being, gifted by chance with knowledge that we live and die? I think that such questionings of soul in view of life come to us not only as we grow older, or when we are tired, but also they sometimes startle us in the first freshness of youth; I have heard them rising in momentary questions of children, deep sometimes as life; and in after years only a slight jostle from outward things will stir often the soul of man with a strange consciousness of being. What is the true life? Is there any reason and method of God in it? Shall this confusion and hurry of a world ever become order, and be at rest? You had some such thoughts and feelings when your mother died, and your childhood was broken. You had them when you had been chasing eagerly after your first ambition, and awoke to find it was naught. You had such thoughts and questions of soul when you stood hesitating, yet compelled to choose your own way, and to face your own responsibility of a life. Such thoughts of life's emptiness have come at times when all was going prosperously with you; and also when you were buffeting with circumstance. You have such thoughts and feelings of life because you are made in the image of God, and can never

rest satisfied until you find the substance of things hoped for. You may throw yourself into business, and let the world around you suck out your own soul; but even business, though it fills a man's thoughts for a while, cannot be done by any man when he is dying; and though we may not care now to take time to think of these things of the soul, every man of us will have to take time to die; and amid the thickening shadows of the last hour, the old, haunting questions of life, often driven away, if never before manfully met, may return, a legion of them, worse than before.

I have been dwelling thus upon these our common human thoughts and feelings with regard to life and death, because I wish now to go with such thoughts of our hearts to the one man of men who seemed to stand above all this our human weakness, ignorance, and doubt; the man who alone of all men has said, in full view of this great, restless mystery of our life,—I know. How did the Christ look upon the lives of men? Did he stand before life, spell-bound and awed, like a child before the ocean? Was this many-voiced, multiform, endless complexity of life, which we see, in which we are tossed about, of which at times even the bravest of us grow weary at heart, to him also endless confusion of joy and sorrow, a tumult of cloud and sunshine—a something without method, or meaning, or purpose, or end? What was our life to Jesus? We may be sure that he saw all these changes, and strange minglings of comedies and tragedies, which so confuse and exhaust us. We may be sure that no novelist, nay, not all the novelists or poets who have had insight into hearts, seen

characters, and made miniatures in their stories of the world around them, ever understood men, or took in at a glance the histories of human souls, or saw to the end, in its last scene, the drama of human history, as did the Son of man who needed not that any should tell him of men, for he knew what was in man. We may be sure, then, that these thoughts of our hearts about life, such thoughts as I have been trying to suggest in words, were perfectly familiar to Jesus of Nazareth. He knew what his disciples were thinking about, as they went from city to city and through the villages with him. He knew the world of men. If we feel at times the myriad multiplicity and infinite confusions of life, and wonder what it all means and is worth ; we may be perfectly sure that the most sensitive and receptive soul that ever was found in fashion as a man felt life as we never have. He was touched, says the record, with a feeling of our infirmities. Indeed, all that we see in the world around us—youth, laughter, love, hope, vanity, passion, evil, death—all these powers of light and darkness which we know—were making and marring the life upon which Jesus looked ; every synagogue which he entered was a bit of the same problem of humanity of which our lives are parts. You may be sure, then, that you never had an experience, a feeling, or a thought about life and death, which in its real nature and meaning was not perfectly known and familiar to Jesus Christ. He measured in his own experience our temptations, and his life took in Cana of Galilee, a sick room in Capernaum, the market-place before the temple, the streets of the city, the country towns by the sea, the master in Israel, the multitude of

the people, the whole world of his day, and of all days—our world-age, and God's eternity.

Remembering thus that Jesus lived as never poet, philosopher, or novelist has lived, in the real world of human motives and hearts, with our real human life a daily transparency before his eye, open now these Gospels, and see if you can find there in Jesus' view of our life, in his thought of us, any such feelings or questionings as I have been expressing in this sermon—any such sense of the emptiness, vanity, strangeness of life, as we have often felt resting like a shadow over our thoughts? Did not he listen to stories of lives as strange and sad as any we have ever heard? Did not he look upon things as contradictory to goodness and God as anything we have ever seen under the sun? And with purer eyes? Did not he feel with larger sympathy and warmer heart the broken, tangled, bleeding lives of men? Did not he bear the sin of the world? Where, then, is our human word of doubt among his words? Where is the echo of man's despair among the sayings of our Lord? Where, in his conversation with his friends, can you catch a note of that minor key which runs through our common speech of life? He could weep with those who mourned; but he spake and thought of life and the resurrection before the grave of Lazarus. Read over these Gospels carefully, and where among Jesus' words will you find even the interrogation-point of our ignorance? Upon what parable of the Lord rest the shadows which come and go over all our poetry of life? What discourse of his fortifies itself by the arguments, laboriously heaped up, with which our faith betrays its

own fear? Read Tennyson's *In Memoriam*; and then read the story of Jesus' words at Bethany. Read Matthew Arnold's poems; and then read Jesus' parables. Read Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, and then read Jesus' single discourse with the master in Israel. Remember, you cannot say that Jesus Christ did not know our unbelief. You cannot say that he did not understand our sense of life's mystery and brokenness. He saw it all in Mary's tears. He read it in the thoughts of disciples' hearts. He heard it in Nicodemus' hard question;—How can these things be? Why, then, did he never reproduce our common human weariness and doubt in his thought of life? Why did he not show himself to be a man like one of us, as he wrestled there among men with all their burdens and their woes? Why was there not a word, or note, or tone, or far-off echo of such human sense of weakness, wonder, hungry doubt as life brings so often to our lips, ever heard in all his wondrous life of toil and sympathy with man? Who is He whose feet tread our common ways, whose spirit dwells above the clouds? Behold the man! Behold Jesus the Lord of life! Behold the Son of man on earth who is in Heaven! He looks out upon this restless, age-long mystery of our existence. But not as we walk insignificant upon the beach before the ocean. He stands before our life in the consciousness of power. He walks upon the sea, and the winds and the waves obey him. Not upon the sea of Galilee alone! Upon the sea of life! Its winds and waves obey him. He stands before our life. Its sin and woe are the burden and the sorrow of the Christ; but its meaning is no unknown voice to

him. It is not an endless wonder to him. He sees our life surrounded by the living God. He sees, beneath our world, undergirding it, God's mighty purpose. He sees above the righteous Father. He sees the calm of eternity. Nay, as you may have looked into a troubled pool of waters, and seen shimmering in broken lines beneath its wind-stirred surface the reflection of the skies, so this man sees the promise of the kingdom of heaven even in troubled Judea. And knowing life better than you or I do, knowing such things as you may have heard yesterday, or may experience to-morrow—enough sometimes to make men wonder whether there be a God, or truth, or anything of worth,—Jesus Christ, in full, open view of all life, said : “ Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye believe in God ; believe also in me.”

We begin to come now in sight of the conclusion to which I wish to lead. I have just been speaking of Jesus' perfect human knowledge of men, and all that enters into our comedy and tragedy of a world. I have asked you also to observe, and to verify by reading the Gospels, the most singular and significant fact that with all this knowledge of humanity Jesus had in himself none of the doubt, the fear, the sense of strangeness, which is our common human inheritance. The evangelists could not possibly have omitted this common human characteristic if the character of Jesus had been the creation of their own imaginations. You will find shadow after shadow of our human questioning crossing the path of Buddha, and lingering upon the heights of human genius ; but not the shadow of

a passing doubt or fear over all Jesus' conversation with men. How could the Son of man look thus in the joy and triumph of a God upon such a strange thing as our life is? It was because he knew what he was sent from God to do. It was because he knew what his own life was to be for the world. It was because he saw the coming order, and the all-sufficient grace for life. It was because he knew that human life was not a hopeless mystery to the love of God, but from the beginning was redeemed and glorified. It was because he knew that his mighty works of healing, at which the people marveled, were but the virtue which had gone forth from the fringes and hem of his robe who was to walk in the power of his Spirit through human history, making all things new. It was because he knew that he was Lord of the creation from before the foundation of the world, and the world sooner or later is to be according to Christ! According to Christ! That is the key-word for the interpretation of the creation. Everything comes right, as it takes form and being according to Christ. Everything in life or death shall be well, as it ends in accordance with Christ. This is the key-note for the final harmony,—According to Christ! This, then, is our simple Christian understanding of life. We do not pretend to explain why things are as they are. We do know, since the Cross and Pentecost, which way the whole is moving. It is toward Christ and his judgment-throne. We do not know how all things are to be made right; but we do know that there has been given us a law of life which is sufficient.

What is given us in these Gospels is not a revelation

of all mysteries ; but what we need much more than that, a perfect method of living according to Christ ; that is our sufficient and our infallible rule of faith and practice. We shall understand life at last, we shall find all its shadows turned to light by and by, if we take up our lives and seek to live them day by day according to Christ. This is a method by which every man may order his life. For it is not a law of commandments, written in a dead tongue ; it is a living spirit. Every man who can read the New Testament, can begin, if he chooses, to order his life according to Christ. He may not understand the doctrines. He may not have satisfied his mind with regard to many questions concerning the Bible. But when he goes down to his office or store, and looks his brother-man in the face, he may know what things are honest, and of good report, according to Jesus Christ. When he goes to his home, he may know what manner of life there is according to Christ. When he sees any want of men, he may know how he ought to help, according to Christ. And when he is with himself, he may know how to bring his own imaginations into subjection, according to Christ. And when any temptation assails him, he may know what he ought to do with all his might, according to Christ. And when men wrong him, and the world is hard, he may know, too, of what spirit and temper he ought to be, according to Christ. Yes, and when trouble comes, or sickness, or we near the end, then we may know how we need not fear, nor be troubled, according to Christ. And in our churches, too, we may be of many minds, on many subjects, but we ought to know also how to be of the same

mind, if we are willing to think and to judge all things by this one infallible rule, according to Christ. The new era is dawning when in all our churches, and upon the whole white missionary field of the world, more than ever before we are to labor, to build, and to rejoice, according to this all-sufficient rule—Jesus Christ. The waste, the rivalries, the fears will go ; the grand triumphant unity of the church in the spirit will come ; as we learn more and more to do our work, and think our thought, and live our lives, by no other rule, in no method less sure and noble than simply this, according to Christ. And if this be our endeavor, if we are willing to adopt this only worthy and sufficient method of a human life, and would live according to Christ, then why, in all honesty and sincerity, should we not stand up and say so in the confession of his name? Not as though we had already attained, either were already perfect. God knows we are not. But we would live after the highest and the best. We would find our lives according to Christ. Then let us, in a humble, manly way, confess him before men, and seek for the grace of life at the Lord's table.

VI.

REAL CHRISTIANITY.

"That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."—2 TIM. i. 14.

THE providence of God requires all Christians and all Churches to show what Christianity really is. I do not mean that good men have not always since the days of Pentecost been required to do this; I do not mean that the generations of believers, martyrs, and saints, have not witnessed a good confession in the name of Christ; but I do mean that Christian history has not yet realized what Christianity fully is, and that it is our high calling from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to show still further to the whole world what Christianity is. Christianity is a larger and better thing than Christendom yet knows. It was the saying of a Church father that we are "to live according to Christianity." When men have learned to live according to Christ, Christianity will be fully come, but not till then.

The duty enjoined upon Timothy, is a responsibility which devolves from one generation of believers to another, and with increasing obligation—That good thing, or that sacred deposit, which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. Still the Holy Spirit dwells in the apostolic succession of

the whole true Church of Christ, showing it what the things of Christ are, and helping it realize them in Christianity.

How, then, are we to understand what the Christianity is which we are still called to make real on earth? In answer to this most practical question, I remark, in the first place, the Christianity which the world needs, probably transcends any single definition of it which we shall be likely to give. Philosophers have tried many times to define the simple word life, and at best they have had only clumsy success with their definitions of what every one knows by his own healthy pulse-beatings. The definition is not made easier when we prefix the adjective Christian to the word life. If we labor to define in words so large and divine a reality as Christianity, we shall be sure to narrow it in our verbal enclosures, and we can hardly fail to leave whole realms of Christianity out when we have finished our fences of system and denomination.

Moreover, in all life, even the lowly life of a blade of grass, there is a transcendent element beyond our definition—a mystery and power of life, which, if we knew, we might know what God himself is. In the Christian life, in Christianity as the continued and ever-unfolding life of Christ in the world, there is a power of the Holy Ghost above nature, and a divine mystery of love, which we may know as a historical fact of redemption, but which no human reason can adequately comprehend.

I remark, in the second place, that Christianity is a larger thing than any one particular aspect or exemplification of it which men may be tempted to put in the

place of it. Christianity, as a whole, is greater than the parts of it which men have hastily seized upon, and contended for as the faith of the saints. This is but saying, in other words, that the Christianity of Jesus Christ is greater than the Christianity of Peter, James or Paul; of Hildebrand, or Erasmus, or Luther; of Calvin or Channing; Christianity is that good thing which all the churches hold in common, and it is greater than all. The Christianity of Christ is that good thing committed unto us, which is large enough to comprehend all the ideals of Christian prophets, and prayers of devout hearts, as well as the works of faith which have been done on earth. It is the hope of the world. And we need to keep this thought of the still unrealized greatness of the Christianity of Christ ever in mind, lest we be found standing in the way of the Christian will of God in the course of events, when we stand with mistaken firmness, not for the whole of Christianity which is in part historical, and in part prophetic, but only for that form or present realization of Christianity which corresponds to our own habits or education. Find out under any given circumstances what is the most Christian thing to be done, or the most Christian thought that one can think; and let us stand for that until we can find something more Christian to do, or a thought more true to the Spirit of Christ!

It would be easy to illustrate from current life and literature the natural tendency of the human heart to substitute some favorite part of Christianity for the divine whole of it. And the unfortunate contentions and hindrances to the Gospel which follow from this

mistake are all around us. Thus one class of persons are called to benevolent works by the divine charity of Christ, but in their zeal for man they may not realize sufficiently that the charity of God is the benevolence of universal law, and the Christ is the life because he is also the truth. Others, on the contrary, impressed by the order and grandeur of the truths of revelation, repeatedly fall into merely doctrinal definitions of Christianity ; and, even while defending from supposed error the faith once delivered to the saints, they narrow that faith into a theological conception of Christianity which may have indeed much of the truth, but little of the Spirit of Christ. This kind of partial apprehension of Christianity has led to the degradation in customary religious speech of some very noble expressions of the Scriptures. For example, in the Epistles the phrases occur, "sound doctrine," "sound in the faith," "hold fast the form of sound words ;" but as these Biblical expressions have come to be favorite rallying words on the lips of many good men, their original largeness and force have been lost. Men often mean now by them, Keep fast your doctrinal beliefs ; be sound in your creed. Paul meant vastly more by them than that. He meant to exhort converts, exposed to all the lusts and sins of a Pagan world, to be sound believers ; to be men of sound Christian faith ; to live according to the healthful doctrine of Christ ; to consent to "the healthy words," he says, "even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness." You will notice, if you read these phrases in their context, that they occur usually in the midst of very plain words

against some well-known sins. When the Apostle is speaking about liars, and men-stealers, and false swearers, he completes his catalogue of sins by the general phrase, "or any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine." Of men who heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts, he says, "They will not endure the sound doctrine." When he is describing the character of the good bishop, one not self-willed, no brawler, no striker, a man not always upon the platform of contention, the hospitable lover of the good, the sober-minded, just, holy, temperate man; it is of this good man, and his life according to Christ, that the Apostle says: "Holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers." Let us beware how we dwarf these large Biblical expressions to the littleness of some small image of Christianity which we may have fashioned for ourselves, and set up for all the rest of the Church to bow down to and to worship. It is, indeed, a great thing to be what Paul meant by a man sound in the faith; what a character confirmed in the truth of Christ, growing in knowledge of God, beaming with grace, full of good works, must he have who is sound in the faith according to the doctrine of Christ.

I remark, in the third place, Christianity is that good thing which we have received from Christ. In other words, Christianity is not a spirit merely, or idea, or influence, which we still call by the name of Christ, but which we may receive and even enhance without further reference to the historic Christ. Christianity is more than a spirit of the times, more than a memory of a life

for men, more than a distillation in modern literature of the Sermon on the Mount, more than a fragrance of the purest of lives pervading history and grateful still to our refined moral sense. Jesus once said before the chief among the people, "I receive not honor from men;" and the patronage of culture cannot make for our wants and sins a Christ from the Father. Christianity is the direct continuation of the life and the work of Jesus of Nazareth in the world. It cannot be separated from the Christ of the Gospels. He came from God; he lived on earth a heavenly life; he conquered sin; he rose from the dead; he sent the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto the Apostles; his Church grew up, and continues to this day, grounded upon the historic facts of his life and work of redemption; its two simple sacraments are the perpetual signs of what God has done for the regeneration of the world; its Sabbath day, the Lord's day, is the calm, steadfast witness, through the hurrying weeks of the centuries, to the effect upon the minds of eye-witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord of glory. Christianity is not like the best essence of other religions, an ideal merely, a fragrance from a broken vase; it is a present fact; it is the vital fact of history; it is an ultimate fact of experience to be explained only by itself. It cannot be analyzed into other facts and understood as a combination, or passing mode, of other forces. Christianity is a fact of redemption, like nature, according to law, yet divinely original as the creation. God only is before the established order both of nature and grace. Christianity, past, present, future, beginning with what

Jesus began to do, continuing with what men may be and do in his name, and looking forward to the kingdom of God which is to be its full and final realization—Christianity, I say, is the one absolute fact of human history, central, supreme, and indissoluble into other facts or forces.

Hence, it would be a vain expectation to imagine that the world can long retain the influence of Christ, the healing aroma of Christianity, and let the Jesus of the Gospels fade into a myth. Christianity, uprooted from its source in divine facts of redemption, would be but as a cut flower, still pervading for a while our life with its charity, but another day even its perfume would have vanished. The Christianity of Christ is a living love.

In the fourth place, Christianity is a changed relationship of human souls to God through Christ. Go back to the beginning of Christianity to find out what it is. It began to exist on earth first upon the afternoon of a certain day when the last of the Hebrew prophets, looking upon Jesus as he walked, said, "Behold the Lamb of God." And two of his disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. That was the beginning of Christianity on earth—not, indeed, what John the Baptist said, but what those men did, when they at once put John's truth into action, and followed Jesus. Those two disciples, going from John, and following Christ, signify the beginning of Christianity. Recall what that act was to them. They were not bad men suddenly reforming. They had not been godless men. They were good Hebrews. Nathanael, who made the fifth Christian, was a man without guile. These men had been trying to

live aright towards their God. But when they joined themselves to Christ, they began to live in a very different relation towards their God. They were soon taught to pray to him as "Our Father who art in heaven." They found ere long that the Son of man whom they followed had power on earth to forgive sins. They would not have hereafter to bring sacrifices to the temple at Jerusalem. One solemn evening the Master gathered them and a few others, twelve in all, who had attached themselves to him, in an upper chamber, and brake bread, and filled the cup, and in words which then they could hardly realize, but with an authority which they durst not question, let them know—afterwards they understood it—that he himself was God's own offering for sin; that for his sake God would come very near to them, forgiving all, and taking them freely into the communion of His own Holy Spirit who should descend upon them at Pentecost with visible signs of the new Christian era. These men are now like new men in another world; in Christ's presence all divine things seem possible to them; they are changed from the centre and core of their being; they are verily born again, for they live henceforth lives as different from their former lives before they came to Christ as though they had actually died out of this world, and come back to it again with the memory in their hearts of a better world. After a few years in Jesus' companionship, after all that they had witnessed of his death and resurrection, they are themselves as men belonging to another world, citizens of a better country, sojourning for a brief season here. "Old things are passed away," says the

last-born of the Apostles; "Behold, all things are become new." This, then, is Christianity—Peter, and John, and other men, living with Christ in a new relationship to God. It is a happy, hopeful, all-transfiguring relationship of human souls to God. Christ giving his Spirit to the disciples, disciples witnessing of the Christ—this, this is Christianity. This is the new life in the changed world which we call Christianity. This is that good thing committed unto us which we are to guard, as his Holy Spirit dwells in us.

What, then, is Christianity? It is, we say, the doctrine of Christ. What is the doctrine of Christ? Men sound in the faith; men made whole, men living according to Christ. The doctrine of Christ is not a word, or a system of words. It is not a book, or a collection of writings. Purposely Jesus wrote only upon the sand. He left not one word written on parchment for men afterwards to worship. He left with us no temptation to idolatry of the letter. He wrote his doctrine in the book of human life. He made *men* his Scriptures. His doctrine was the teaching of the living Spirit. The doctrine of Christ—lo! Peter, the tempestuous man, strong one moment and weak another, become now a man of steady hope, confessor, and martyr—he is the doctrine of Christ! The son of thunder become the apostle of love—he is the doctrine of Christ! The persecutor become one who dies daily for the salvation of the Gentiles—he is the doctrine of Christ! Jesus left these men, and other disciples like them, to do the necessary writing that other ages might know for certainty of his life, and receive the truths which are the expres-

sions of his personal Gospel to man from God the Father. The Spirit was bestowed upon them sufficiently to enable them to give us these Christian Scriptures as our supreme authorities for the words and teachings of Jesus; but the Bible is not Christianity. Jesus left inspired men to make the Bible; he himself made Christianity; and the Christianity which Christ made and is ever making, shall endure; it shall be the kingdom of Christ given up to God the Father after this world shall be among the things of the past; and then, in the presence of the Lord, seeing the glory that excelleth, we shall have no further need of the partial revelations of prophets and apostles, of the Bible we used on earth.

What is Christianity? I have been seeking for a real definition. I have said, It is the disciple with the Master, or the disciple with God, as never before, through the Christ. But this is not all. The divine reality is always beyond the human speech that would overtake it.

Once more, fifthly, Christianity is the company of disciples in new relationship with one another, and towards all men, through Christ.

Christianity originated on earth with two disciples, not one. And the two disciples, we read, heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then one of these two findeth his own brother Simon and tells him of the Messiah. The next day Jesus findeth another ready to follow him, and he goes at once and findeth Nathanael. Thus Christianity, the day after it began to exist, consisted of five persons following Christ—his men bound

in an altogether new relationship to each other by their newly-found relationship to the Messiah ! So the new society was constituted in the first act of faith in Christ. Christianity in its beginning was a human companionship in a divine friendship. Having thus begun as a society, Christianity at once grew and spread according to its original genius of fellowship. Less than four years after the two found the Messiah, we read of some three thousand souls who continued in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, and all that believed were together. It is not enough, therefore, when we say that Christians and churches have social needs and duties. Society is of the very essence of Christianity. The new redeemed society is Christianity. A man cannot be a Christian, at least not a whole Christian, by himself alone. To seek to live a Christian life by one's self, in the secrecy of one's own heart, is an endeavor foreign to the original genius of Christianity. Christianity, when it is finished, will be the best society gathered from all the ages, the perfect society of the kingdom of heaven. How can a man expect to fit himself for that blessed society by neglecting here and now to enter into the fellowship of believers who seek to prepare themselves for that final society of the Lord by meeting and breaking bread together at his table ?

Remember, Christianity is first two disciples following Jesus ; then twelve confessing the Christ ; then seventy going forth in his name ; then some three thousand receiving his Spirit and being all together ; and now a goodly company gathering in Christ's name from every land ; and at last, at last, the city of God, and the

nations of them which are saved walking in the light of it, and the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, saying, "Alleluiah : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth !"

To be a Christian, therefore, is to be actually a follower of Christ with his disciples. I say actually, because men may follow Christ only with their thoughts, or their wishes, or their feelings, ideally, sentimentally, liturgically ; but those first two disciples really followed him, and they left everything else in order to continue following the Messiah whom they had found. And so may we be actual followers, though he leads us now along his way of life not by wonder of visible appearance before us, but quietly by his Spirit. This is only saying, in other words, that it is not so difficult, it certainly is not impossible for us, in the real purposes of our own hearts and in the common daily circumstances of our lives to decide what is Christian—what is the most Christlike thought to think, the most Christlike feeling to cherish, the true, Christlike thing to be done. But to be Christian in this real way will require sincere repentance from sin, an actual, not sentimental, struggle against selfishness, and a thorough-going committal of ourselves in everything to the will of God in Christ for us. And to make real and not merely nominal work of it we shall need often with deliberate resolution to give ourselves up to our own faiths, to throw ourselves manfully upon their current, and to let them catch us up and bear us whither they will. Believers too often stand doubting and hesitating upon the edge of their own faith, not ready to trust themselves to its stream. The world behind them is a hope-

less tangle ; there is no way out there ; plunge back into it, and they will have to return, panting and torn by the thicket ;—the only way out from the pathless perplexities of nature is to follow the course of that pure faith which flows through nature like the river of life. Take to the stream ; keep well in its current ; beyond the rapids, beyond the wild wood and the gloom of the shadows, are the broad lake, the habitable fields, and the sunset. What we need as professing Christians is not to waste so much time standing still, shivering upon the borders of the faith whose promise runs before us ; we need to commit ourselves wholly to our own Christian beliefs ; to launch our lives upon them ; to work, and to enjoy to-day, as though there is a God who is thoughtful of us as we are of our children ; to fight triumphantly the evil nature of man in the assurance that sin is forgiven, and there is a crown of life waiting for him that overcometh ; to meet the anxiety of to-day with the larger trust for eternity ; and, taking our immortality for granted, to plan every day for it, laying up in our own enlarging hearts, and in our friends, the treasures of heaven.

One word of application more. The fact that Christianity is essentially society, the one true society of earth and heaven, is a fact full of present duty for us. As the Christian cannot be a whole Christian by himself alone, so no church can be the true Church by itself alone. Christianity is that good thing which is in all the churches. It is “that large thing in the midst of all the churches” to which many hopeful eyes are now turning. Our particular tenets and methods of administration are not of the essence of Christianity. The peculiarity of no

church in Christendom belongs to the eternal substance of Christianity. These things of government, worship, and denominational confession, are the temporary forms, or accidents, of the Christianity of Christ. And what the world needs now is less of our forms of Christianity, and more of the real Christianity of Jesus Christ. The missionary energy which seeks to gather from all nations the new society belongs to the Christianity of Christ. His also is the Christianity which in a city seeks to save men from sin and suffering, and to bring all classes of people together in a new society in the one sufficient Name. That is not the Christianity of Christ which is content with filling its own pew, and letting the rest of the world find its Messiah if it can. That good thing committed unto us guard. There were two ways during the war of guarding the national capitol. One was by keeping a large body of troops in the fortifications around Washington at the peril of the army in the field. The other way was by supplying first the army in the field, sending them forth where the enemy were, and caring secondly for the home fortifications. The latter way saved Washington, while it took Richmond. This also is the best way now for us to guard the Christianity of our churches. They best defend the faith once delivered to the saints who do the most brave and aggressive work against the actual sins and real denials of the world. And if, in any critical period of faith, it may be necessary for us, along some lines of doctrinal attack or defense, to achieve that most difficult of military manœuvres, to change front under fire; if those who observe coolly where the strength of unbelief lies, and

from what direction the real peril of faith comes, do counsel some change of doctrinal front to protect exposed positions ; let the churches follow, hopefully and bravely, without firing into our own ranks, in order that we may still guard, as good soldiers, that which is committed to our trust.

VII.

THE CHRIST-LIKENESS OF GOD.

"For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."—1 TIM. iv. 10.

THERE is latent in this Scripture a double energy of truth which the providence of God is now calling forth for the more thorough Christianization of Christianity. An historic power of Hebrew faith is in this Biblical expression, "The living God;" and there is further Christian energy of truth in these words, "Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." God is living, now, here, on earth, everywhere; and God is our Saviour. Christ is usually called Saviour; but this name of Christ the apostle here transfers directly to God. In several texts God is called our Saviour. God, then, is to us what Christ is. God himself, then, is essentially Christlike. He must have in Himself some Christ-likeness, for He is, as Christ, our Saviour. Let the energy of these two truths once enter into a man's heart—the truth that in everything we have to do with the living God, and the truth that our God is the Christlike One, and they are enough to revolutionize a man's life. These two truths of God's living Presence and Christ-likeness have always been hidden in the practical theology of the Church. They

have not always come to their proper recognition in the speculative thought or reasoned theology of the Church; but they belong to the substance of the faith once delivered to the saints; and even amid doctrinal errors, or unworthy thoughts of God, they have survived in the trusting heart of God's people.

These truths, that God is the living Presence, and that God is Christian in all the depths and glories of his being, are truths now seizing upon our religious thought, and pervading our best religious literature with new power of the Spirit. The revival of theology, which is growing in grace and knowledge of God in this country, is energized by these convictions that God is here and now, the living God; and, I say it reverently, that the Almighty Lord and Ruler of this universe is a Christian Being. In all our reasoning and speech about divinity and human destiny, we need to recognize simply and fully this essential fact of revelation that our God—the living God—is of all beings the most profoundly and really Christian. At all times, and in all relations, we are to conceive of God both as the living Presence, and as the Christlike One.

Let me seek in this sermon to bring our minds into some contact with the energy of these truths, latent in this and many another text, so that we may find our thoughts lighted up by this Scripture, and may go hence to stronger lives.

First: Our hope is set on the living God. This is a familiar Biblical phrase. But it was not a phrase merely to those men whom Moses urged to right living, as he said: "For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the

voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" This word, the living God, had not become an echo of a vanishing faith to the Psalmist, longing for the communion of the temple, who uttered Israel's national consciousness in this prayer: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." It was a word intense with faith, when Simon Peter looked up into the eye of Jesus Christ who stood before him, flashing his divinity like a glory into his soul, and asking, "But whom say ye that I am?" and Simon Peter answered, and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was not a mere refrain of exalted religious sentiment, but a part of the liturgy of glad lives, when Apostles, and those first Christians, swelled the chorus of faith in the midst of persecutions with these triumphant words: "We trust in the living God;—God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope;—ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God."

At different periods in the history of the Church, the Spirit whom Christ promised should lead his disciples into all truth seems to have fixed the mind of the Church upon some particular truth which was needed at that special time for man's growth in the knowledge of God. Thus, in the first centuries, the mind of the early Church was riveted upon the nature of the wondrous person of Christ; and the Nicene creed was the result of three centuries of thought about Christ. In the Reformation the truths of free grace and the sole sovereignty of God became the strengthening bread of life for

believers. God leads his people at different times to different phases and powers of the truth according to their present need. And is not his Spirit still leading us, if we will put away our own opinions, and seek to learn those things of Christ which for our own peril of faith we need to have shown to us? Certainly it is noticeable at the present time how many minds in different parts of the Christian world are being led to deeper convictions of the personal nearness of the Father, and, at the same time, into a reviving faith in the pure Christ-likeness of the Almighty God. I will not pause now even to glance down those inviting ways of thought along which many minds are being led straight through this material system of things out into belief in the spiritual omnipresence of God. The philosopher of largest intellect which Germany has produced for many years—a man trained both as a physician and a metaphysician, who has not long since gone hence into the unseen—Hermann Lotze—became so firmly impressed with the omnipresence of Spirit in the creation, that he thought it impossible to conceive of the mechanical relations of things, of the communication even of motion between two wheels, without the hypothesis of a spiritual element behind all physical things, and in which all things consist.

A professor of chemistry, with whom sometime since I was talking about nature, and what it really is, said to me, thoughtfully: "The order of nature is God's personal conduct of his universe." It is not with a dead nature, or an impersonal order of laws, but with the living God in his personal and most Christian conduct

of the universe, that we living souls have to do here and hereafter. But I wish at this time to dwell more fully upon the other truth of our text.

Secondly: Our hope is set on the living God our Saviour. I have heard in the class-room of a theological seminary much brilliant analysis of divinity; that God is, or, at least, was in the beginning, the great First Cause; that he is in all probability of reason the Preserver, Lawgiver and Judge; that he is the Trinity; that he has various attributes and perfections which he must jealously guard, and a law whose honor he must maintain in justifying sinners. I believe that these propositions about God are, for the most part, well-reasoned and true ideas of divinity, so far as they go. But unless from his Bible and through his life a man has learned to know something of God himself—his personal nearness, and his Christ-likeness—how is he fit to go forth and preach the Gospel? How can a man preach Jesus' Gospel, which the people heard gladly, unless, in some way, he has realized in his own heart what perfect and blessed Christ-likeness God is? Unless he can look up into the silent sky, or down into the lowest depths of human suffering and sin, or away to the ends of the world, and say, with a faith into which his own heart has grown, and in which his reason has learned to wait expectant: "My hope is set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe?"

It is a principle of far-reaching sweep and reconstructive power in theology, to think of our God above all as most Christlike in his inmost being and nature.

God is in Christ; God is showing himself to the world in Christ; God is himself an infinite and adorable Christ-likeness. What is this but the finished and complete Biblical doctrine of God? We are to take this truth, therefore, boldly from the finished Bible; and in the pure light of it we should read every chapter and verse in the Bible, and judge the Bible by it; we should judge the Bible, that is, by its own final and perfect truth of God manifest in the flesh. Many of the ideas and traditions of men which prove burdensome to Christian conscience have arisen from failure to read and to interpret particular Scriptures in the light of Christ's final and perfect disclosure of what God himself is. Men have said hard things, words hard to be believed, concerning God and his decrees, because in their eager reasonings they have forgotten the truth which all the while they believed in their hearts, that the Almighty Sovereign of this universe is really a Christian God. One illustration only of many let me recall.

I once saw in the city of Nürnberg, I think it was, a religious picture, in which God the Father was represented in heaven as shooting down arrows upon the ungodly, and midway between heaven and earth Christ, the Mediator, was depicted as reaching forth and catching those arrows, and breaking them as they fell. The painting was true to methods of conceiving Christ's work of atonement into which faith had fallen from the simplicity of the Bible; but it should not be called a Christian picture. "God, our Saviour," said Apostles who had seen God revealed in Christ; and Jesus him-

self once said: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." But I do not wish to linger with the painful and profitless task of showing how easily believers may fall far below Christ's revelation of the Godhead. Rather I want to urge you to a constant and bold habit of thinking of your God as he has disclosed his moral nature to the world as most thoroughly and adorably Christian.

It is one thing—and an important thing—to obtain from the Scriptures some adequate doctrine of the divinity of Christ. But it is another thing—and practically for us a more important thing—to have God through Christ brought as a living and inspiring Presence into direct contact with all our plans and work and happiness in life. One may confess with his lips the equal divinity of the Son, and yet not have the Father through the Son in the real inspirations of his life; and, on the other hand, there are those who have touched, as we think, but the hem of the true doctrine of the person of Christ, yet with a touch of faith which has brought to their lives a healing virtue. That poor woman who went away from Christ healed, made well and sound for her household duties by her touch of faith upon the hem of Jesus' garment, was a truer Christian than a Nicodemus who knew the law, and heard Jesus' profoundest truth of the Spirit, and went away to think about it.

In sincere acceptance of Jesus' word that he knew the Father, and came from God, let us read the Gospels for the purpose of learning what God himself is towards us in our daily lives; how our world appears in the pure

eye of God ; how he thinks of us, and is interested in what we may be doing, suffering, or achieving. To him who came forth from God to show the heart of deity towards this world of ours, let us, too, hasten with the multitude who gather from all paths around Jesus upon that mountain-side. We, too, have been trying to make ourselves at ease and happy in this world, and we, like these other men whose faces are marked with anxieties and cares, have not found life the satisfaction which we want it to be. Jesus opens his mouth and speaks ; and, with the great multitude of earth's unsatisfied children, we listen : Blessed are the poor in spirit ; blessed are they that mourn ; blessed are the meek ; blessed are the merciful ; blessed are the pure in heart ; blessed are the peace-makers ; blessed are they that have been persecuted ;—and through his speech of blessing run these words of promise—strange, some of them, like music in an unknown tongue to us, yet all so real to him—the melody of his own wondrous life—and waking, too, in our hearts feelings that seem like reminiscences of something beautiful, once known and lost—these sweet, pure words of promise : For theirs is the kingdom of heaven ; for they shall be comforted ; for they shall inherit the earth ; for they shall obtain mercy ; for they shall see God ; for they shall be called sons of God ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. And he who opens his mouth, and teaches the multitude, utters God's heart to us upon that mountain-side. This is God's own blessedness showing itself to the world. Such is God, blessing with his own blessedness the virtue which is

like his own goodness. Yes, but as Jesus, in his speech and person, realizes God before us, how can we help becoming conscious of our distance of soul from perfection so divine? Before him our hearts confess their sinfulness; he is the blessed One and we are sinners, lost how far from his pure peace! Listen again to this Wonder of Being from above who has said—and no man can convince him of sin and gainsay his witness to himself—“I and my Father are one.” We stand in that house where he says to a palsied man who trusted him, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee;” and when, in our surprise we ask, under our breath, “Who can forgive sins but God only?” our questioning does not escape his ear who hears even the thoughts of our hearts. “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thy house.” He speaks for God. So God is towards man; this word is from the bosom of the Father; there is on earth divine forgiveness of sin. But the fear of death is here in this world of sepulchres. We never know when our homes shall be broken into by that dread power before which all our caution and all our art, time and again, sink helpless. We might love to love were it not for death. The worst thing about our life here is, that the more we fit our hearts for the highest happiness of friendships, the more we fit ourselves, also, for sorrow; love is itself the short prelude so often to a long mourning. What does God think of this? What can God in heaven think of us in our bitter mortality? Follow again this Jesus who says he knows—and surely none

of us has virtue enough to doubt him—what will he show God's heart to be towards human suffering and death? Lord, show us in this respect the Father, and it sufficeth us. Numbered with the great multitude who have lost friends and know sorrow, let us also go with this Christ from God, and see what God will do with sorrow and death. There, coming slowly out of the gate of the city, is a procession of much people. We do not need to be told their errand; often we have followed with those who go to the grave. The Christ who says he knows what God our Father is and thinks, meets them who are carrying to his burial the only son of a widow. It is all there, the whole story of man and woman's grief. The husband compelled, perhaps years ago, to leave the woman whom he had sworn with his soul's truth to love and keep; and she left perhaps with a mere child clinging to her skirts to find what life she could from a world too eager about its own hard business to stop to shelter her; and now that the boy has grown, and come in some measure to take the place of the father's strength, after all these years of care and toil, he, too, is dead. Of what worth is life? Yet still death is cruel; he snatches youth from life's fair promise, and leaves the widow, with worn-out heart, to years of emptiness. The Christ sees it all; and more than all which disciples see;—he looks on through the years, and beholds death's broad harvests, and the generations of men passing each from earth in pain and tears; the whole history of death through the ages he bears upon the knowledge of his heart.* What, then,

* I would acknowledge an indistinct recollection of a similar use

does God on high think and mean as he sees the mourners going forth from the gates of every city, and all life here ending, like this young man's, in silence and darkness? What will God do with death? "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came nigh and touched the bier: and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." We might not be able to credit the miracle, if, indeed, death be the last law of life; if the miracle were an exception to God's universal plan and purpose for all the dead; but it is not. That single resurrection is not an exception, but only an anticipation of the higher law of life over death. It was not a miracle, but only an illustration beforehand of the larger law of life. While the widow wept, while the sisters of his friend Lazarus could not be comforted, Jesus knew that life is the rule in God's great universe, and death the exception. The final law is that death shall be swallowed up in life, and no victory of death be left at last in any earthly grave. That resurrection of the widow's son is not, then, a miracle, but a prophecy to him who works it. It is not a miracle, but only an anticipation of the fulfillment of his will from eternity to the living God. Christ bidding that woman, weep not; Christ showing by anticipation the power of the eternal life is the representation upon this earth, over its open graves, of what God is in heaven, and means to do at last with death. So God is

of this narrative of the Gospel in a sermon which I heard many years ago from Newman Hall, but which I cannot find in print.

towards us and our human hearts. Love on! love well! toil on, and be not weary! I am the resurrection and the life. The last enemy shall be destroyed; I am the living God.

Yes, this is a glad Gospel from the bosom of the Eternal; but there is so much in this world beside death which we never would know anything more of in any other world. This earth is full of human cruelty and oppressions. Man's passion would lie in wait to ruin the very angels if it could. We cannot walk on the streets of any city in the world without seeing signs of suffering and the wretched work of sin. And we can trust the world around us only a little way. We have formed from long familiarity with life an instinct which keeps us always on the watch against the lie. We want to leave our own self-deceptions all behind us, and to lose the instinct of suspicion in another world. Let us go, then, once more with this Jesus into the city, and see what he will do with the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. In the world from which he says he came, and into which he declares he is going soon—for a little while to be unseen by his own friends—in that world will he suffer these men to be? "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites;—How shall ye escape the judgment of Gehenna?" It is the same Christ who is speaking,—he whom we heard saying, Blessed, and in words which seemed to be a song from the heart of his own life,—he who went weeping with the sisters at Bethany,—who once sent that procession of mourners back in triumph and joy to the city. It is he who now stands before those extortioners and hypocrites, and says in God's

name: "Woe unto you!" It is enough. The face of God is set against them that do evil. No lie shall enter the gates of that city of the many homes. Jesus shows God the Father to the scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. His love, so pure, so luminous with all joy, so deep in its eternal peacefulness, God the Father's love, is and shall be forever the Gehenna of all lies, the consuming fire of sin.

Yes;—but again our human thoughts turn this bright hope into anxiety. These men may not have known. We would go into the city and save all. We would let none go until we had done all that love could do; we would not suffer any man to be lost if love could ever find him? How, then, does Jesus show us God is towards these lost ones? Listen; he sees a shepherd going forth in the storm over the bleak mountain-side, seeking for the one lost sheep; and this Wonder of divinity with man—he who came from God and knows—says, Such is God; "Even so it is not the will of your Father in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." This is the picture of the heart of God drawn by Christ's own hand—the shepherd seeking the one lost sheep. And there is a Scripture of an inspired Apostle which might be written beneath that picture which Jesus drew of God's disposition towards all who are lost;—"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." Upon this word from God may not our questioning fold at length its wings and rest? Such is God's disposition towards all men; if any man hath not forgiveness either in this world, or the world to come, it

is his own choice ; it is his own sin, and that not against conscience only, but against all that God could reveal to him of his spirit and will of love—the sin not against the law of nature merely, but the sin against the Holy Ghost. Observing in our creeds the reserve, as well as the moral positiveness of revelation, and giving now earnest heed to these warnings and these woes of Christ-like love, we can suffer many questions to remain unanswered in this world, because we believe in the eternal Christ-will of God, and are sure, although we cannot in all cases see how, that God will in the end, before the judgment day, have shown himself to all souls to be the most Christian God.

Two consequences of these truths remain to be urged. God himself is to be seen through Christ, and Christ is to be studied through all that is best and worthiest in the disciples' lives. Therefore through human hearts also which reflect in any wise Christ's spirit, we may seek to realize what God is. God is what they would be, only infinitely better ; his perfection is like man's, only infinitely transcending it. Let us be very bold in this living way of access to God. Truly has it been said that the command, Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect, may reverently be turned the other way ; and any human approach towards perfection be made the image of what God is. The golden rule which Christ gives to us as the measure of all our morality, is a rule which he took from his knowledge of God's own personal conduct of his universe. To the least of his creatures God will do what he would have done unto him, if the

creature were God. And so a living Christian preacher has taken that rare chapter in the epistle to the Corinthians upon charity, and made that conversely the Christian mirror of God. Surely our love is but reflection of his light in which no darkness is. Through that chapter of love not only look out upon your neighbor, but also up towards God. Where will you find a clearer telescope to bring the heavens of his glory near? Interpret what God is—what his law and commandments are—through these inspired words;—"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. If I have not love, I am nothing." Read that of God himself. For surely He would not have us be what he is not. Yet look not through the words merely up to God. Make these words, make Christ's life, most real to you, by finding out the best and truest things in human homes, in the best men, in the most Christlike friends you have ever known; understand better your own most unselfish impulses, or deepest needs, or noblest desires, and then with these—all imperfect colors though they be, yet with these—dare to imagine for yourself the Jesus who walked in beauty, in the midst of our sin, pure and undefiled, showing in everything God's thought and heart. Be very bold in this truest, human thought of the living God. For what has God come down to us in the form of man, even of a servant, if he would not have us come up thus to him and know him as he has revealed himself in Christ, and all Christlike things? Such is the God whom we are to have in all our thoughts;—not God far off; not God an unknown Cause before all

things ; not God hidden from us in the unutterable glory of his own deity ; but God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ; God near to every one of us as Jesus was to that disciple who leaned upon his bosom ; God in Christ, God most Christlike then, the Christian God.

And just this word more, for my sermon would lack the one thing necessary to secure it all without this further word. God is in Christ. God, I have been saying, is Christian, essentially and eternally Christian. Therefore if you would know God, you must live according to Christ. Every sin is so much ignorance of God. Through goodness only can He who is the Good be known. To know God our Saviour we must become Christlike. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

VIII.

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF THROUGH CHRIST.

"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered."—Luke xxii. 61.

IT was in a flash of divinity upon him that Peter discovered his own loss of manliness. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. The divine man looking with the clear eye of truth upon him revealed Peter to himself. One look of the Lord of glory was enough to convince him of sin. He remembered, and went out and wept bitterly. Once before a flash of divinity upon him had convinced Peter of sin. At a word from Jesus of Nazareth we read he had let down his net after a night's fruitless toil, and, to his amazement, "they enclosed a great multitude of fishes." The result impressed Peter with an overpowering sense of something unlike all other men in the Son of man who had just been teaching the multitudes from the boat. Peter believed himself to be in the presence of some wonderful revelation of God. And as soon as he became aware of himself as a man in the visible presence of a divine power, what was his first instinctive, irrepressible thought? When he saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He was as good a man as we are. He was no worse than his partners in the other boat. He had

no vices that we know of. No special history of sin was traced upon his countenance. We know that he was an outspoken, warm-hearted man. He had an honest face. Children probably would not have been afraid of that strong, eager, kindly man in his fisher's clothes. Any one needing help might have singled out Peter in that crowd of Jews as the one to whom to make his appeal. Jesus knew what manly stuff was in Peter, when he called him to be one of his apostles. Indeed, as Peter was more of a man than most of his fellow-townsmen, so he would have passed for a thoroughly respectable and good man and citizen in any community. Yet when he saw himself in a flash of divinity upon him, he could only say : " I am a sinful man." I suppose that at the time when he denied Jesus he had really become a better man than he had been before he knew and followed Jesus. He must have become, under Jesus' influence, a larger, manlier, more prophetic soul than he had been before as a fisherman of Galilee. Nevertheless, he did an unmanly thing, and he was about to persist in it, when the divine Man looked him full in the face ;—and in that look he saw himself again. He remembered. He realized under the eye of Jesus what he had been doing. A glance of God into his soul revealed his loss of himself. Beholding his Lord, as he stood in the calm triumph of his divine manhood looking into his timid soul, he could not help knowing himself in his weakness and shame. Not a word was spoken. God does not need to speak to judge us. He will only need to look upon us. One look of divinity is enough to convince of sin. Peter the denier, under

the eye of the Son of God, became at once Peter the penitent. And we know how afterwards Peter the penitent became Peter the man—firm as the rock—the true Peter, hero of faith, and made worthy at last of meeting and returning with joy the look of the risen and ascended Lord among the sons of God on high.

These effects of Jesus' flashings of God upon Peter show very simply and plainly Jesus' method of convincing men of sin, and of lifting them up through repentance to real and everlasting manliness. They indicate, therefore, a kind of work which needs very much to be done now in the Church, and in the world, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. We need all of us to see ourselves in God's eye. We need to stand revealed to ourselves before the living God. We need to learn what we are, and ought to be, in some flashings of divinity upon our souls. And we need to take ourselves into the divinest presence we can possibly find anywhere upon this earth, and to study and really know ourselves in that presence, because there is so much that is fictitious, artificial, and unreal, in our traditional speech about sin and conviction of sin.

The fact of life here in point is that when a preacher stands before a modern congregation of well-dressed and well-to-do people, old and young, and tells them that they are sinners, that they are lost sinners, and that they ought to repent, and to cry out what must we do to be saved?—the words have a sound so familiar and so far-away too from their daily thoughts that it is perfectly easy for the majority of them to listen, and to think at the same time of something else. Nay, it is easy for

the preacher himself to speak such words in the same far-off way, in the same unconsciousness of reality in the words which he speaks concerning sin and the judgment to come. We can even set heart-breaking confessions of sin to music, and sing in our churches to operatic airs words which, if they have any reality about them, would pierce the air rather like the cry of a lost soul. Peter did not go away from the Lord's eye singing ;

Shall the vile race of flesh and blood,
Contend with their Creator God ?

He went out in silence and wept bitterly. When a miracle of divinity made the living God the one consuming Reality of things to him, he did not sing ;

Lord, I am vile, conceived in sin,
And born unholy and unclean ;
Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts the race, and taints us all.

He fell at Jesus' knees, and said, "Depart from me, I am a sinful man !" He had a real, personal sense of his unworthiness, and in straightforward speech he owned himself to be what he saw that he was. He did not substitute his parents, or mankind, for himself in his real confession before Jesus Christ.

The Biblical expressions, of which such hymns are theological renderings, were originally intensely personal. Everything about the Biblical language of confession is personal, real, actual. Its most intense expressions of human unworthiness rose from the memory of actual sins. And the prophets of Jehovah were too much in earnest, in their hard grapple with the real and crowding

iniquities of the people, to go off into generalities of doctrine about original sin. It is indeed much more agreeable to us to indulge in sound words of confession of our generic human sinfulness than it is to acknowledge to our consciences our particular, actual, and individual sins. The general confessions of the Church may thus become easy pillows for a half-awakened conscience, and in the very act of confessing that we are all miserable sinners, our eyes may be closed upon ourselves, and our souls go to sleep. Language of confession which once may have been real, and throbbing with vital meanings, becomes our tradition of religious speech. Or words which to some men, in some moments of vivid conviction, are real as life, and in their violence of self-accusation inadequate to their sense of the unutterable blackness of sin when seen over against the pure, white light of the holiness of God, may be used by others as the proper forms in which their religious emotions should be moulded. Piety becomes thus partly fictitious, a form borrowed from others' lives—a habit of speech deemed proper. This is hurtful to conscience. A fictitious theological sense of sin has dulled the moral sense in many instances. Because the forms of religious experience have been borrowed from the Church, and put on as the proper garments for professors of religion, the piety of even Christian men has sometimes lacked truth in the inward parts, and they have been oblivious of some very unbecoming sins while wearing the Christian habit of general confession of the sinfulness of their lives. Any untruthfulness in our religious habits or modes of speech cannot fail of bad moral reactions

upon our lives. An honest ounce of real conviction of a sin, is better than a pound of general acknowledgment of our human sinfulness. An act of real repentance before God and man for actual sin is more like the true penitence which Jesus enjoined upon his friends than a willingness to allow in every prayer that we are worthless worms. It is said that there used to be in the types of religious experience a deeper sense of sin than is often manifested now-a-days. But, granting for the moment the fact, and not stopping to note other limitations, or reactions upon character, of that earlier type of religious experience in New England, this one present fact is clear ;—we cannot make a modern congregation of people return along the same lines of religious experience through which our fathers came up out of the depths. And if we seek to restore the forms and the fashions of their religious life—forms which may have been most natural and honest to them—but which are not so to us, we shall be in great danger of falling ourselves, and of leading others to fall, into a fictitious religious experience, and a hurtful dishonesty in our secret religious life. But the last place in all this world for anything artificial, or not perfectly true to ourselves, is the presence of Jesus Christ, and before his cross. For our Lord came to reveal God to men just as God is in his own eternal Christ-likeness ; and he came also to show human hearts to themselves just as they look in God's pure eye. Jesus of Nazareth was the most real of men. The fashion of no age was upon his manner of life, and no guile ever lighted upon his lips. He did not live in a fictitious world created by

his own thoughts, and peopled with his own imaginations. Jesus lived out in the open, and in full, clear view of the realities of the kingdom of God. The Son of man is the one absolutely unartificial, or real, man of human history. Amid these passing forms of things which blind our eyes, and these fashions of the world which delude our hearts, he walked with God, knowing the Father's thoughts, and, even while his feet pressed our earthly trial-way down towards death, ever conscious of himself as being, in his own pure peace, "the Son of man which is in heaven." Hence everything about the words of Jesus bears the impress of reality. Hence the New Testament is always the most real of books. This Gospel we know is a Gospel of real life. These words of the Lord are realities revealing themselves to whomsoever will look and see. Jesus reveals everything around him,—the mysteries of God's thoughts, and the hearts of men—all as they are. Jesus is himself the mystery of the ages becoming light, and shining before our eyes. You know that in the self-revelation of some word of Christ you have understood yourselves better than you ever did before. Or if you have not, you may. No man ever felt Jesus' eye upon him, and went away without a look into his own heart which he had never had so clearly before. Some men went away from Christ to the judgment. The thoughts of many hearts, as Simeon foresaw, were revealed by him. Jesus' Gospel, therefore, being thus intensely personal, real, and revealing, is the most honest thing in this whole world. It is no form; no fiction of life; no exaggeration of feeling; no mere speech about God and the world to come; it is

the one essentially and perfectly honest thing in this world of words and forms, and fictions of life. When we really understand Jesus' word with regard to any question of life, we have reached down to the truth, the principle, the law, the divine fact, at the bottom and heart of it. But if our faith is something put on our lives; something strained, assumed, not quite real to us, we may be sure we know the mind that was in Jesus too imperfectly, and not as we should seek to learn Christ's real answer to the thoughts of our hearts. It will not do for us to be content in religion with anything which we have not made our own. The language of faith is "I believe;"—not, "My father believed;" or, "My neighbor believes." We cannot be Christian successes of men and women upon borrowed capital of faith.

I come back now with this thought of the perfect human honesty of Jesus' Gospel for life to the subject which is the burden of this sermon, viz;—our sense of personal sinfulness. It would do you no good if in preaching as I would to-day upon the sinfulness of sin and the duty of immediate repentance, I should repeat to you extracts from the sermons of Jonathan Edwards. Those words were real to him. They would not be to you. He had as a reality in his life a daily sense of the holiness of God in heaven. There shone before him the divine holiness burning with light! It awed him, but it attracted him. It humbled him to the dust, but it lifted him up also to heights of prophetic vision of God's righteous judgments. And these experiences he uttered in the words which were the natural language of religious experience in his day. They were impressive

realities of speech, therefore, to his hearers. But Edwards would reason of the divinity which he experienced in different forms of speech now. While, however, we fail to make the habit of life with which Providence has clothed us answer to his forms, or to the modes of any other age than just our own, shall we miss the truths which have been the real powers of the world to come in the lives of all the saints? We must lose the substance of faith unless we are honest enough and brave enough to go straight to Jesus' Gospel for ourselves, and to take the truths of the Spirit as we may find words to receive them in the daily language of our own hearts.

How, then,—to keep the main question foremost,—are you men and women, you young people, born as you have been in good homes, trained from childhood in the first principles of Christian conscience, and with lives blossoming with fair hopes, or bearing good deeds known of all men,—how are such as you to be convinced of sin, brought in penitence to the cross, and led to ask the old question of lost sinners,—What must I do to be saved? This most pertinent and personal question, I would try to answer, as I believe we may answer in the simplest and most straightforward manner all religious questions of our day, by consulting not with flesh nor blood, not even with the prophets or the apostles, by stopping not until we stand before Jesus himself with his eye upon us. We are to see ourselves in Jesus' eye. We are to know ourselves through Christ. We are to know what we are, what we ought to be, what we should confess, what we may become, as we fall like Peter at

Jesus' knees, and remember ! Let his divinity once flash upon your soul as it did upon Peter's, and you would need no sermon to convince you of your personal unworthiness and need. Christ's way of convincing the world of sin is by showing it God. If we could see him in his divine Manhood and ourselves before him, no words would need to be spoken. Our inmost instinct would come out in the words of real confession, "Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But the distance of eighteen centuries lies between us and the supernal flashings of that eye of divinity. And we can find in the present half-Christianized world many artificial standards of character beneath which to shelter ourselves and our desires of life. We are as good as others. We have been guilty of none but little sins. We have given to the poor. We have been governed for the most part by good feelings. So had Peter. But what made him, when he saw God revealing his presence in a miracle, fall to the ground with that cry,—“Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord?” We say it was conscience. That moment when Jesus looked upon him, conscience awoke under the eye of the Lord. But that does not seem to be all. There was more than a flash of conscience in Peter's sudden recollection of himself. His remembering, his repentance, was his whole soul realizing its darkness, its unworthiness, its littleness, its own measureless need, as God shone through it. He went out self-revealed before God manifest in the flesh.

My friends, I might set conscience up in this pulpit for you to look at, and for it to look through you and me. I might call our sin to judgment in the name of

conscience. I might proclaim the inexorableness of law and the natural certainties of retribution. I might leave all gross passions and all great sins outside, and take the simplest, smallest sin which we all must confess, and let that be seen in the beam of light of a perfect conscience. I might take thus the single, actual sin, of which many times we all have been guilty, the petty sin of being cross, and show under the analysis of an electric light of white conscience what a venomous, loathsome thing that small sin is ;—how it is a worm upon the honor of manhood, and a blight upon the beauty of womanhood ; how it is a violation of the rights of our neighbor,—our nearest neighbor too often in our own homes ; how, if that sin had might as it has evil, it would make life a discord, and ruin a world ; how it is in its own nature a mockery of God's sunshine, and a blow against love ; how, if that sin of a cross word, or a deed thoughtlessly hard—too small a sin we think when we become aware of it, and the evil mood passes from us, to be confessed—be held under the illumination of a powerful conscience, it is seen to be a spirit of mischief which would sting the heart of goodness ; a sin of ingratitude and meanness which beats, though in impotent littleness, against eternal law and harmony, and pecks in petty spite at the hand of the Mercy which would feed us ; a small sin, which when we realize it as it is, would be great enough to cause an angel who could commit it to fly from heaven's gate ; a sin gross and wretched enough, could we feel its despicableness, to make the proudest man or woman of us turn red at heart for very shame, and to convince us that we are far

from perfect,—not whole, but still broken and wrangling souls. Yet even this illumination of conscience is not the full condemnation of a sin. Carry that sin of yours back until you see Jesus looking upon it. See it—what it is—in his flashing of God upon it. Lay that sin of yours upon the brightness of God. Conceive, if you can, of that common sin of yours and mine as ever once committed by Jesus Christ! It would blot out the glory of his life from these Gospels. It would take away our Lord. See that sin against God's splendor! Imagine, if you can, God committing that little sin! The throne of light would be darkened forever, should what you esteem that little passing shadow upon a human life fall one moment upon God's glory! The least thought of sin carried up to Christ, to God, and conceived of as his, becomes unendurable. Why? Because it is sin. Because it is exceeding sinful. But that is where every sin great or small shall be carried for its last judgment. Up to the great white throne! We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. That means, among other meanings, that if conscience is enough to convict us of sins, God is greater than conscience, and, as we shall know ourselves under his eye, we shall have something of Peter's conviction of his own unworthiness when the Lord looked upon him, and he remembered, and went out and wept bitterly.

Let me specify two or three particulars which are brought out in Jesus' revelation of men to themselves.

He made men, whom his divinity searched, under-

stand that they were personally responsible for their own real characters. He did not allow his disciples to condemn men for their misery, or their misfortunes, or the consequences of their circumstances, or any of those influences which meet from beyond their own wills in men's lives. But he made every soul of man realize that within life's circumstances there is a living centre of personal responsibility. He did not reason about it. He did not need to argue it, for he himself was the demonstration of it, he was himself the living, shining evidence of man's personal responsibility and duty before God. Peter never once thought of the divine predestination determining his act of unmanliness when Jesus' eye rested upon him. He knew he himself had done what he ought not to have done, what with Jesus' glance piercing his soul he despised himself for having done. Jesus made men understand, also, that in their sinning they have to do with personal beings. We do not sin against abstractions ; or against a system of commandments only ;—we are persons in a society of persons of which God is the centre and the source. All sin is against the realities of a most personal universe. Sin strikes against beings. Peter sinned against the Lord who had chosen him, and who was about to die for him. The sinfulness of sin is not that it is simply a transgression of a law ; but it beats against love ;—all sin is against love, against all love ; for it is sin against the living, personal being of God.

Again, as Jesus Christ showed men themselves in their sins, he showed them also that those sins of theirs are something which God cannot endure forever. They

must not be. They shall not be. God cannot always endure them, and be the God he is. Jesus said he did not come to judge the world; and yet again he said; "Now is the judgment of this world." His presence before men did judge their sins. It could not help it, any more than the sun can help revealing the earth while it shines to bless it. Jesus' life among men showed how unlike everything which God can love, and wish to have last with him in eternity, a human sin is. Even now when we think of some of the cruelties of this world, we ask, How can God endure them? It seems as if he must come himself and put a stop to these things. We think thus, we ask sometimes this question of doubting faith, because we are Christians, beginning to see in our Christian light how contrary to all heaven the wrongs of men and women and little children are. God in heaven, then, cannot and will not stand the sin of the world forever. Jesus the Christ, in bringing God's character directly to bear upon this world in his own sinless, saving life, knew that he was also of necessity judging the world, and in his death condemning its sin with an infinite condemnation. Our sins, then, the actual every-day sins of our lives, are condemnable. They are by Christ's life condemned already. God on high cannot suffer us to go on in this way forever. He must redeem us and make us like himself, or he must do something else worthy of himself with us. This is morally certain. If there be a holy God—and Jesus Christ, standing supreme in the midst of our turbid history of sin, is the visible evidence that there is a holy God,—then it is morally certain that

this long human contradiction of God—the sin of the world—must somewhere be brought to a stop. It may be to a sudden stop. It cannot run on and on forever. God is God.

And one thing more is clear as a star in the mystery of Godliness. There is one thing more which we need to know which Jesus makes bright as day in his Gospel of God to man. When Peter was at Jesus' knees saying in the first honest instinct of a man who saw himself, "I am a sinful man;"—Jesus stood over him radiant like a God, and said, "Fear not." Such is God's lovely attitude towards every penitent at the feet of his Almightyness! Fear not! Sin is forgiven and all its darkness made bright in the love which reveals it. The cloud of our sky becomes a glory at the touch of the sun. If we will not come to the light to be made known and to be forgiven, then we remain in the darkness. Penitence is holding ourselves up in God's pure and infinite light, and letting him shine our darkness away. Fear not; sin is vouchsafed forgiveness in the same love which shows it to be sin, and condemns it. That divine look which made Peter remember what a wreck of all his manhood he was making, was also a look of forgiveness from the heart of the Saviour who saw the splendid possibilities of a man in the crushed disciple, and who was about to die that he might open for him and all men the gate to glory.

So may it be with us. Sincere conviction of sin is the beginning of the birth of manhood worthy in Christ's name to be crowned! Out of penitence the life blossoms into the light. God is love. The lost are

found. We are called by the divine glory and virtue. And still to our city Immanuel comes, and in our homes, in the language of our own sins and needs and hopes of life, Jesus preaches the Gospel of the kingdom of God, saying: "The time is fulfilled; and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the Gospel."

IX.

GOD'S FORGETFULNESS OF SIN.

“For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”—JEREMIAH xxxi. 34.

WE believe that we are living souls, and that death and destruction cannot put us out of existence. We are also embodied souls; and if even the gross matter of this present world can furnish a brain fitted to be the organ of mind, much more shall the ethereal matter of the world to come furnish the finer material for our freer life in a spiritual body.

But this belief in ourselves as embodied souls born and destined for immortality, carries with it consequences which startle us when we think of them. One momentous truth involved in the nature of our present life, and belonging to the substance of the hope of its continuance in the resurrection, is the fact of memory. One of the appalling obstacles between sinful men now, and their eternal blessedness hereafter, is the indestructible fact of the memory of sin. If memory were not a book of nature itself; if memory were merely reminiscence, dependent upon our wills, so that we could remember or forget as we please; then every one after death might leave his sin buried in oblivion at death, and begin life over again in a better world, if he would, like an innocent child, new-born in heaven. But is memory an act

of will, or is it an organic fact, a part and state of the substance and the life both of body and soul? And if the latter be the fact, how are we ever to forget the evil of this world which has entered into our being, and become part of our life?

The poet Dante, as he wandered through the forest of the terrestrial paradise, came to a stream which on the one side was called Lethe, and on the other Eunoe, for it possessed the double virtue to take away remembrance of offense, and to bring remembrance back of every good deed done. Immersed in Lethe's wave he forgets his fault, and from Eunoe's stream he returned,

"Regenerate,
E'en as new plants renew'd with foliage new,
Pure and made apt for mounting to the stars."

What would not many a burdened soul give if it could find that water of deep oblivion, and come forth regenerate from that stream of blessed memories? Many guilty souls there are who would gladly turn toward a better life, and follow virtue like a star, if they could break loose from the heavy memory of their past which holds them back and keeps them down. But they can not destroy that past from the minds of others, or from their own memory. They would be different men, and might have a future, if their past were not an indestructible part of their present existence. The future is mortgaged to the past.

Where flows, then, the stream of happy forgetfulness? A poet's dream may not beguile us;—what are the facts, the stern, unchangeable facts of memory? Is memory

an unalterable record of life? And if it is life of our life, and part and substance of our growth, what way of escaping from this earth's tragic history of sin and death, can we ever hope for? Shall the shadow of this earth always lie before us upon our path?

The facts of memory are these. The mind of man is a chamber of memories—a hall of echoes—a gallery of endless whispers—a house haunted by shades of the past. The mind is one labyrinth of memories—like a catacomb of the dead. Everything we have thought or done has its resting place in it; passage leads into passage, cell opens after cell; there is an endless succession of chambers in memory; some are narrow and dark, and rarely visited; some spacious and more frequented; and we search through our memories, following a slight thread of association as a clue, or turning hither and thither our attention, as one does a flickering torch in passing through a subterranean catacomb of Rome. Recollection is as the torch in the traveller's hand through this endless labyrinth of memory; but memory itself is the receptacle of all our past. There is a place in it for all the deeds done in the body. Or if it be urged that its capacity is limited, and that the long buried in memory must be cast out for that which has just passed into its quiet chambers, still the habits of our past have made and form these very chambers of memory; and though many deeds seem to have been lost, and name be engraven over name in memory, still the record of the years remains in the structure itself of the soul. All that the mind has been used for remains a memory wrought into its own structure and form.

It is a fact, then, which the organization of the body and the laws of the mind alike attest, that we are not the makers or the masters of our own memories. Only within narrow limits can we recollect or forget at our pleasure. Memory is a physical and mental fact to a large degree independent of will. I spoke of memory as an organic fact. I mean that it is a fact of the organism of the body, as well as an essential element of the mind. The body has a memory of its own which a man can no more alter or efface than he can add one cubit to his stature, or change the features of his countenance. This body, although it be but a passing form, a mere flow of atoms, nothing but matter in perpetual flux, nevertheless has a life-long memory of its own. It keeps every scar. It retains in our features ancestral lineaments. It brings our fathers back to life in its involuntary motions and gestures; nay, it brings back the ages before our fathers were born, and in its structure and growth preserves and reproduces the whole process of creation from the lower forms of life up to man; and it has also its daily memory of our own acts and training. The eye has its memory; the tone of the voice, the ear, the very finger-tips on the keys have their memories; the nerves have their memories beneath our consciousness, often beyond our wills; every organic cell in this body is a chamber written over with memories; and the brain is a great echoing-hall of memory; the two hemispheres of the brain are rightly called the sounding-boards of all that transpires within the body. Sensation, thought, volition have each their corresponding echo and memory in the brain.

Memory, then, is organic. It is a bodily fact. It is a part of our embodiment. No ingenuity of human art has ever invented to watch the watchman a self-registering machine so accurate, so constant, so unalterably true, as is the human brain—God's register of the deeds done in the body. Carry now this truth one step further. If in the present physical basis of life there is provision made for memory ; if matter so gross as the brain can become the register of the mind ; much more may memory be continuous and comprehensive in the spiritual embodiment of the soul ; much more shall it be made perfect in the resurrection. If we believe that this life is only the beginning of us, then every consideration which proves that memory is a present organic fact of our existence, goes to show further that it will be a continued process hereafter ; that it shall be then even more pictorial and comprehensive of our life. It is not difficult to imagine how every line and impression of the present life shall be etched upon the substance of the soul which goes hence, or how the spiritual body, fair or demoniacal, shall be set free from the present mortality as an embodied memory of our earthly lives. The types of the printer's case may be distributed, ready to be taken up again in a new form ; but if the copy has once been struck off, the writing remains though the types be distributed. So these atoms of matter in their present arrangement in our brains are not ours forever. They co-exist in us only for our momentary use. The form shall be broken up, and they shall be distributed, dust to dust, and earth to earth ; but the soul shall have taken, before this bodily form is broken up, the copy of this mortal life and its deeds, and

hence shall continue with the impression of it stamped upon it forever. The soul is now taking the form and shape of the thought and acts of the life in the body. The soul going from the body into the unseen is not the same soul that came to itself in this body. It is the soul with the impression of life left upon it. It is the soul formed and moulded for the future state according to the deeds done in the body. It shall enter the resurrection-body not as it entered this body of flesh. The materials of that spiritual form of existence shall be associated by its associations, and adapted to its adaptations, and more even than in this grosser element of existence and in this imperfect body shall the soul appear in its form and motion to be what it is in its spirit and purpose; the inner thought shall create more unmistakably the outward semblance, and memory shall be the visible embodiment of all that the life has been for good or evil.

I am reasoning in such statements from the less to the greater; from the capacity of the grosser element to the capacity of the more ethereal; and I say, therefore, if we believe that we have souls now growing in these bodies for immortality, if we believe that we are destined to awake after death in some organic form or spiritual embodiment, then we must also believe that we cannot escape from our past, and that we cannot find flowing through death's dark valley any stream of forgetfulness; for memory is a part and element of all organized life here and hereafter, and we carry in ourselves a book of remembrance which no change of outward circumstance can efface or destroy, a book written in the lines of our own being and preserved in the form and substance of

our souls. Memory can never commit suicide, and cease to be.

But this is not all. Not only do we have in our own organization a memory of ourselves which we cannot tear from us, but also the universe has a memory of us. The memory of men's lives is a part of the universe. The record of our life is a line written in the book of things. It belongs to nature. We cannot blot it out. And if we carry this truth of memory still further and higher, we rise to the conception of the unalterable memory of the Eternal. Can God forget? Can God put our sin out of his eternal remembrance? Can God ever make our sin to his own thought as though it were not, as though it had never been? We might indeed say that God possesses in an unlimited degree a power which we possess in a limited degree; and that as we put things for hours and days out of mind, as we can hold under the illumination of attention now this, now that recollection, and let everything else meanwhile be buried in forgetfulness; so might God, if he would, put our sin out of his memory forever. And we may say, moreover, that should God be pleased to remember no more our iniquities against us, then by his unlimited power over memory as an infinite Will, our sins might never be permitted to return, or to cast their shadows of fear again between God's love and the sinner he would forgive. Cannot God put what he pleases out of mind, and by his infinite power of will keep it out of his thought forever? Cannot God will not to remember our sin?

We must look here also calmly at the facts. This is not simply a question of power over will. It is not

simply a question as to what an Almighty God can do ; but what God as an infinitely perfect moral Being will do. In the unlimited power of the divine will over the divine memory or thought, we might find the Lethe of the sin of the world, and the divine oblivion of our transgressions for which we pray, if we could imagine how God could forget sin, and not, at the same time, forget his own holiness, forget his own righteousness, forget some essential attribute of his own divinity. But God will not will to forget himself. He cannot deny himself.

Consider well the great difficulties in the way of the eternal forgetfulness of the sin of this world. First, sin, as has been observed, is an organic part of ourselves. It has entered into the life of the soul. Our nature carries its scar. We stand as sinners before God. Secondly, our sin is a part of the memory of the universe. Our evil nature has shown itself to others, and is remembered. The universe holds it in remembrance. The earth has felt our impatient step. The air has vibrated to our passionate cry. The sun has seen the flash of anger in our eye. Every element has received the impression of the deeds which we have done in the body. And other souls carry us in their lives on with them to the judgment. Thirdly, our lives are written also in the thoughts of the Eternal God. He cannot forget us though we may forget him. He holds us in perpetual remembrance.

How, then, can sin ever be forgiven and forgotten? For surely it is not enough simply that it be forgiven, and not forgotten. It is not enough for the happy

restoration of a broken human friendship that the wrong which broke it should simply be forgiven; it must also be forgotten, or there can be no glad reconciliation, and no new, real, and abiding friendship. Two friends who have been alienated cannot walk together again, if the wronged person is simply willing to forgive; if the wrong which separated them is to remain ever present in the memory of either of them; if one sees it in the other's eye; if, though not a word be said about it, either must be inwardly conscious of it whenever he is in the other's presence. If the wrong done cannot be forgotten as well as forgiven, it would remain as a great gulf fixed between those who once were friends, although they should eat again at the same table, walk the same path together, and lie down at last in the same grave. It would be idle for us then to dream of heaven after the sinful life of earth, if these memories of sin are only to become quickened and intensified in that sinless world hereafter. Death cannot be the rest for which we long, if it shall only lay bare the nerve of a sensitive memory. Of what avail the companionship of angels, if between them and us there shall lie the ever present distance of the thought of our earthly sin and shame? if we cannot banish beyond all recognition the evil which has found lodging in our bosoms? if the memory of it shall always be in our thoughts or theirs? if the whispers of our own hearts condemning us shall be the judgment of a moral universe reverberating around us? if these heavens which have looked down upon the long history of human passion, and this earth which has been the sepulchre of human crimes, shall not pass away into a new heavens

and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? How shall we stand before God, and be perfectly at our ease under his pure eye, happy in unconscious sinlessness in the light of his holy blessedness, if our sin is to be with us also there in his presence, in our memory and in his thought of us?

There are those who tell us that God out of his mere benevolence can forgive sin, and open the heaven of his holy presence to the sinner who would return. Yes, so might a kind human friend say to one who had done him wrong,—“I do not care; you may come back at any time and sit at my table if you please; I will not speak of the offense; I am willing to let it pass;” but still, although unmentioned, the wrong also would be there, sitting at the same table with the two who sit down together again. The wrong once done shall be always as a shadow between them, until something be done to put it away; until something be done to enable both to forget it, something that shall cost some sacrifice, some suffering, some reparation for the wrong, some humiliation, and some manifestation of the evil really inflicted and the pain really felt on account of the sin which is to be forgiven. Something must be said and done once for all of the nature of an atonement for the sin which separates those two, in order that each may experience the joy of a restored friendship, and that full reconciliation in which the wrong done is to be henceforth morally forgotten as well as forgiven. Surely, then, it is not good theology to imagine God to be reconciled to this world at a less effort and at a less cost of sacrifice and suffering than is required for the perfect binding up of a broken human

friendship. Reconciliation does cost humiliation, suffering, self-vindication, at least through sorrow and pain for the sin committed, on the part of the person who would forgive, and then the recognition also of this effort and cost of forgiveness on the part of him who is to be forgiven. Otherwise the forgiveness does not reach to the bottom of the wrong, and the healing is only on the surface of life. There is no real reconciliation between men until by some work of grace, by some gracious condemnation once for all of the wrong which was done, by some humiliation of suffering for it on the one side, and answering penitence on the other, by some agreement or new covenant of good-will into which both can enter, it is accomplished and henceforth clearly understood that the offense is to be both forgiven and forgotten.

And shall the infinitely perfect One be less human in his forgiveness than we? How can the Holy One forgive and forget our sin? Heaven's answer is the Cross of Christ! Through his work of atonement for sin is opened the divine way of forgetfulness of the sin of the world. God would always from eternity forgive sin; he is pleased in his pure grace to forgive sin; but that he may forgive sin, and forget it, that he may remember it no more against us forever, he puts in the place of that dark memory of what man has done the bright memory of what Christ has done for us. That gracious and grateful memory ever present in God's thought of this world of Christ's perfect obedience unto death; of his one finished act of condemnation of all sin; of his full and perfect victory over all the power and death of sin; oh! that is the complete atonement for our faith to

accept, the full reconciliation, the new bond and testament, the restored and final friendship between God and man. God remembers man henceforth as he stands before him in the nature and grace of Christ. Hence he can forget man as he was without Christ. Justification is God's covering the knowledge of what we once were in our sins by the blessed and all-transfiguring thought of what his own love in the suffering Redeemer has done and always is for us. And this is no mere act of power or violence over memory. It is no arbitrary act of forgetfulness. It contradicts no ethical principle of memory, human or divine. It is a moral hiding from the divine remembrance of the sin of the world, which has been already and once for all condemned in the same suffering for it by which the divine willingness to forgive was made manifest. To say that God can forgive, and therefore he will, without any atonement, without any realization of his own righteousness in his act of grace, would be to say that God can forget law, and right, and his pure self-respect; that God can veil his full moral glory behind the single attribute of his mercy. Not so do the Scriptures reveal God to us. He cannot deny himself. He cannot sacrifice one divine virtue or grace to another. In all things he is wholly God. The whole moral perfection of deity must be satisfied in every act and thought of God. God cannot, then, by a mere act of kindly suppression of his own knowledge forget that hardened Pharaoh would not let his people go, or that Judas betrayed his Anointed with a kiss. He cannot by an act of almighty restraint laid upon his own omniscience forget the death of the martyrs whose blood cries to

heaven, or the wrong of a single woman's life suffering under the cruelty of man's passions, or the offense done the least of his little children by a selfish world. Surely not by stroke of omnipotence can this world's history of sin and woes be annihilated from the mind of the Eternal. God has not sought thus to put our sin far from him. His glory is not in his power, but in his love. He has provided a better way, the only way of putting our sin from him, the way of moral substitution, not of physical annihilation, the way of moral reconciliation and justification. God puts his own knowledge of our sin far from him as Christ comes nigh and ascends the throne of his majesty in his perfect confession of the sinfulness of our sin, in his perfect obedience in our nature to God's holy will, and in his perfect oneness with us in our humiliation before God. God in Christ can forgive and forget sin without denying himself. Our sin, which God always would forgive, can be sin forgiven and forgotten, because it has been at last perfectly confessed before God, and God's necessary pain over it has been realized and revealed in the sufferings in it, and for it, of the Son of his love, and its condemnation, once for all, has been visited upon it in the death of him who prays in God's pure will that his enemies may be forgiven. In view of Christ and his Cross there remains no moral need that God should remember our sin a second time against us, and he will remember it no more against us forever. The eternal presence of the Christ in our nature and for us before the Father is the sufficient reason for his eternal forgetfulness of our sin which he would forgive. God sees us in Christ. God thinks of us always in

Christ. There is henceforth no moral reason why he should think of us otherwise than in Christ. He has no divine need to remember us otherwise than in Christ's oneness with us, and our union with Christ. We are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Therefore all things are ours.

There is no violence done anything moral or divine in God's vicarious forgetfulness of man's sin in his eternal memory of Christ and his Cross. If, then, God has made such a morally sufficient atonement for sin that he can forgive it, as he would forgive it, and can forget it without denying himself, it follows also that we ourselves shall be able to put hereafter our own sin of this life out of mind, and all other pure beings shall be able to let it pass as a dream of the night. The memory of it, indeed, we cannot suppose to be physically annihilated. We might recall it, and others could recall it, if moral reasons for remembering it shall remain. But the divine reconciliation leaves no reason for any holy being to bring up our earthly history hereafter to our shame and condemnation. We shall always be known, it is true, as the ransomed of the Lord. We shall have the name of the Lamb in our foreheads. "These are the earth-born, whose robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb,"—shall be the grateful story of our lives to be told in heaven. We, ourselves, shall delight in the history of redemption. We shall remember that God has graciously and righteously permitted us to forget those things which are behind, as we press forward, forgiven spirits, into the perfections of the kingdom of heaven. In the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins are now new births of the spirit, and the soul whose sin has once been divinely forgiven and

forgotten may in that glad consciousness begin to live a new life of hope in which all things shall be new, and it be itself a new creature in Christ Jesus. It shall be changed from glory unto glory until at last the soul that once was a dark memory of sin shall become as the image of Christ, itself renewed and made pure by the grace in which it is forgiven, and it shall cast no more shadow in the light of God's holy presence.

Thus the recollection of what Christ has done and is for us, the inflowing health of the new life, and the victory over sin and death shall take the place of the self-consciousness of sin and shame, perfectly and continuously at last, as even now they begin in part and in the best moments among Christians to do. The world's history of sin and death shall become a strain of gratitude and love in the harmonies of the new song of Moses and the Lamb. God shall transform and transfigure all our recollection of sin and suffering into the consciousness of love and life, not by the magic touch of power over us, but by the renewing touch of his grace;—as he changes the dark cloud of the night into the glory of the dawn by causing the morning light to shine through it. There is no other way than God's gracious way of moral substitution for the removal of the memory of sin. It is not the violation of any lower law of nature, but is the operation in our redeemed natures of the higher law of love. The light of God in Christ transubstantiates our dark consciousness of guilt into joy and peace in the Holy Ghost. There is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. Who of us will not accept so great salvation?

X.

MAKING FOR OURSELVES SOULS.

"In your patience ye shall win your souls."—LUKE xxi. 19.

THE revised translation restores this word of Jesus to its original force. The Lord did not bid his disciples simply to possess their souls in patience. He told them that through endurance they were to win their souls. Souls, then, are for us to win. Literally the word used by Jesus means, procure for yourselves souls. Life is to be to us, in some sense, an acquisition of soul. We should not press, indeed, a single word too far in the interpretation of Scripture; but we may often follow profitably, as far as we can, the direction in which an inspired word may start up, and send off, our thoughts. This active verb used by Jesus in relation to the soul is suggestive. The text, at least, swings open the gate to a stimulating inquiry. How may the disciples acquire their own souls? Is it possible that men may have something to do in procuring for themselves souls? Are we to work with the Creator in making our own souls? We usually think of human souls as so many ready-made products of nature bestowed upon us at birth,—so many receptacles for life of different sizes,—and we are to fill them up with experience and education as best we can, as bees fill their hives. But Jesus used of the souls of his disciples a word of purchase and acquisition. We are to go

into life, and, as men in business gain possessions, we are to procure our souls from life. Souls, then, may not be such ready-made products of nature as we are accustomed to imagine; the souls of men are possibly but the seeds of immortality. They may be the germs scattered by a Spiritual power in this soil of the flesh, and destined to spring up, and to grow, if we do not succeed in killing them, into the powers of an endless life. In some real sense a true life will be an acquisition of soul. Its daily ambition may be,—more soul, and better!

This truth that we are to procure for ourselves souls, may become more visible to us if we begin by turning the subject over and looking at the reverse of it. You have seen men losing soul in life. It is a fact that the heat and drought of worldliness cause the souls of men to shrink. Men's very souls seem sometimes to become dry, hard, and small in selfishness. The process of soul-wasting and soul-shrinking is continually going on in the world. There was a man born apparently for large things. His mother's eye brightened as she looked down through the years away into his golden prospects. His father's pride saw him climbing thrones of power. At thirty, at fifty, people who knew him when a boy, speak of what a man he might have been. Some sin at the root of the life has shrivelled the soul which once began to grow. How souls born for nobility shrink in the heat of some ignoble ambition! A prince of men, capable of the power of a statesman's idea, enters the race for office,—and shrinks to the measure of a politician's soul! The Lord of life hung out a pure ideal, shining like a star, before that artist's or poet's genius;

but his first success filled his eye,—and he serves the fashion of the hour who might have reigned with kingly souls! God ordained that man to be a preacher and prophet of the kingdom of heaven; but after his first larger search for truth, he lost in his much knowledge the humble love of truth, and his soul shrunk into an ecclesiastic! Other souls, too, are dissipating themselves in pleasure; or the grip upon a man of his business may leave a soul dry and juiceless as a sucked orange.

Look a moment longer at this reverse side of our truth, even though it be not altogether pleasant to contemplate it. You have known men—I have—who seem not merely to have lost character or manhood, but who seem actually to have lost much of their human nature in courses of sin. They seem to have hardly any soul left with which to respond to the common feelings and motives of humanity. You found that old acquaintance living on the husks of the world, and you tried to give him something better. He seemed to have lost the power to receive it. You tried to help him up again; but he did not seem to have soul enough left to stand up even when helped. Such men have lost the power to feel themselves what others feel for them. They seem to have had the human nature eaten out of them; and they live stolid, insensate, like the brutes that perish. We will not say they are hopeless; we should not say God's grace may not still reach down, and touch them, and bring back living soul to them; but when we see them, and perceive how our common human nature, which has grown in some others into souls so large, lofty, and fruitful, has shrunk back in them into its roots, and

become shrivelled and dead, we can understand better what Jesus meant when he said, "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell!"

From all the wretched knowledge forced upon us by the daily record of the evil of the world, it is to my purpose to seize now only upon this single particular, that sin is, or at least seems to be, destructive of human nature in men, exhaustive of their very souls. Milton's Satan, so strong and commanding in his Satanic purpose, may be a correct picture of what sin was when it began; but the picture of an insensate drunkard, a senseless idiot, may be a more correct delineation of Satan bound. "Sin, when it is finished,"—so the Scripture assures us, which experience begins already to verify,—“bringeth forth death.”

Keeping in mind this knowledge of the possible wasting of a soul in the world, turn the truth over again, and contemplate the happier process of soul-acquisition. We all, from our youth up, and down through old age, would wish to gain more soul and larger—but how? In what ways are we to set about procuring for ourselves souls?

The first thing for us to do is the thing which those men had already done to whom Jesus gave this promise that they should win their souls. What they had done—the first decisive step which they had taken in the work of finding their lives—was not, indeed, to acquaint themselves with all knowledge, or to peer into all mysteries. They had not even lingered at the doors of the school of the Rabbies. But when One who spake as never man spake, and who looked into men's souls with the

light of a divine Spirit in his eye, came walking upon the beach where they were mending their nets, and bade them leave all and follow him, they heard their own being commanded as by the king of truth, and at once they left all and followed him. They counted not the cost; they obeyed, when they found themselves commanded by God in Christ. This promise,—Ye shall win your souls, was addressed to men who had surrendered themselves wholly to that which they had seen, and knew of God. It was a pledge of soul made to men who had the wills of disciples. Two simple words had been repeated more than once in their hearing;—"Repent," "believe;"—and they were willing to make both those words facts of their daily purpose and conduct. This prime condition of winning our souls remains unchanged, and no simpler or more searching words for it can be framed than those first requirements of Jesus Christ of every man; "Repent," "believe." If a man wishes in all sincerity to gain his own soul, he must begin by turning with a will from the sin of the world which he knows has laid foul, destructive hand upon his life; he must rise, and meet duty, trusting himself with all his heart to every whisper of truth and echo of God within him. The first step in the way of acquiring our souls, let me repeat, is the decision of discipleship. It is not to entertain this feeling, or to possess that knowledge, but to put our wills into God's will as the disciples of old left all and followed the Master. How can a man expect to gain a soul worth keeping, unless he first is willing to work with God in making his own life? We put, thus, the condition of winning our souls in the most

general principle of it when we say it is to have the will of the penitent who would believe; it is to bring our own purposes and desires of life to the decision of discipleship. Are we willing, at the core of our own thought of ourselves willing, to be disciples of the Truth, to be disciples of the Love? I speak not now of the particular forms, or duties, in which this spirit of obedience may be realized. With the open Gospels before us, and life's next duty at hand, it is not hard for us to put our own decision of discipleship to the test. The forms of conversion may be manifold as are the fashions of the sunrising. The essential thing in Christian discipleship is to be really willing to do the Lord's will. In proportion, therefore, as Jesus Christ makes God real to men, and reveals the righteousness of God all glorious and commanding before us, in that degree does his Gospel bring our souls to a crisis; and we determine whether we will win or lose ourselves, as we decide duty and obey truth when the right thing and the true thing to be thought or done shine before us, a revelation from God to us, in Jesus Christ. I am confounding this simple essential of the disciples' will with no doubtful disputation; I am saying that every man to whom the Gospel is preached can find not far from him in his own path of life the point of decision across which he may step forth to his work as a Christian disciple. He will not have to look far or long for the duty or the conviction which shall bring to the judgment his inner purpose to go his own way, or to follow God through his life; and that place in our path of life where the disciple's decision is to be made will always be marked in some scarce mistakable manner by these

two first requirements which Jesus made the narrow gate into his kingdom,—“Repent,” “believe.”

But after we have made the Christian decision, after we have determined that to the best of our knowledge and belief we will be disciples—how then are we to work with God in making our own souls? The answer to this inquiry may not only be of help to those who have confessed Christ as their Lord, but also to those who in any doubt or unbelief think often they would be glad if, like disciples of old, they could find their Messiah. For the methods of living and the principles of conduct which are profitable to Christians, may prove also the right way for those who would find life's Truth and Lord.

I answer then, secondly, we are to acquire soul by living now with all the soul we do have. If we are to win souls from life, we must put our whole souls into life; but the trouble with us is that we often do not. We live half-hearted, and with a certain reserve often of ourselves from our every-day life in the world. But you remember how Jesus insisted that his disciples should serve God and love man with all their souls, and with all their strength. The way to gain more soul and better is to live freely and heartily with all the soul we do have. A little reflection may suffice to show us how much is involved in such statements.

There, for example, is a man who is putting his will into his business; yet he is leaving some conviction of the truth which his life ought to seek out of his work. He is toiling like a slave at his task, but not giving his immortal self the benefit of so much as a Sabbath hour's

outlook towards a world of freedom. He is doing, perhaps, his duty towards those dependent upon him, but not allowing himself daily the inspiration of a moment's prayer for light and life. He is like a Swiss peasant among the Alps, bearing steadily his burdens, but never looking up. The traveller will forget all the weariness of the way as he looks up and sees the Yungfrau's crystal peak rising into the evening's cloud, leaving him thinking of the great white throne, and the glory that excellet. Then, still another man is living somewhat religiously, but not throwing himself heartily into the opportunities of his life. He may have worked his way up to affluence. His property represents will, brains, self-denials, persistent toil. So far that man has done well. He has earned what he has. He has put himself into his work. But many lives just at this point seem to stop short. That man who has put himself honorably into the toil of making money needs also to go on and put his whole soul into the work of seeing it well spent. A good man has only half done his life's work, he has only improved half his opportunity, if he has succeeded in making a fortune, and then fails in seeing it started off in the best possible directions before he dies. A man may gain sterling qualities of character in achieving success, honorable success, in business; and he may gain still more soul and better in employing the same powers by which he made his money in seeing to it that it shall be put to the best possible uses in the world which he is soon to leave. In general we fail to acquire souls for ourselves from life whenever we settle back into ourselves, and do not throw our hearts into every day's

opportunities. Another person—to continue this observation of the manner in which we easily leave whole powers and ranges of ourselves out of our habits of life—is thoughtlessly letting the best enthusiasms of his youth pass by, while he loiters on the shores of his own prospects, never spreading a sail to the heavenly airs which invite him to set forth. He hesitates to commit himself to the influences which are sent from above; he follows no far purpose; and by and by that man will be found, as so many are found, left hopelessly aground in his own oozy selfishness; a heavenly gale cannot stir him now—his life's opportunity has ebbed far away! Here is another man who is living vigorously and even combatively in a part of his own soul. He makes his reason his castle. He sallies forth in every direction from that. He has his troops of arguments always under arms, and treats the whole domain of truth as a land which his understanding is to conquer and subdue. But this is a very narrow way of thinking. That man of valiant understanding resembles the mediæval baron in his castle on the Rhine. That argumentative, warlike understanding is the feudal baron of the world of thought and theology. But this broad earth never could have been mastered and explored from the castles of feudalism; and the whole rich universe of truth never can be won by the armed questions of the human understanding only. There are things which must be loved in order that they may be known. There are discoveries of God to be made by our hearts going out in humble, happy ministry through life, as well as by the proud troops of our reasonings. The kingdom of heaven cannot be

taken by storm, while its gates may open of themselves at the knocking of a little child. This man who means to live by his reason does well as far as he goes ; only he is leaving much of his own soul out of his meagre conclusions—he needs to go to school to his own heart. Then the Gospel of heaven may be preached to him.

And so I might go on holding up a mirror to life, and showing how one after another of us lives but in part, and how we fail to win more soul and better from the world, because we are so content to live in single chambers, and even small corners of our own immortal selves. But above all these broken, partial lives of men look up and behold the Man who lived never in part, but with all his heart put daily into his life with men and for man. Christ alone may show us what a whole-hearted, whole-souled life should be. Not only did he sit at meat among publicans and sinners, and stand before the blind and the lame offering to make them whole ; but also he walked in the midst of his chosen friends, binding up their broken, partial lives, himself the perfect man, the author and the finisher of their faith. He completes lives. He gives soul and heart abundantly in life. Has he not said we are to love God with all our minds, and all our hearts, and all our strength ? “ Yes,” some one thinks, “ but how can I in my little tread-mill of a life, in my circumscribed sphere, put my whole soul into it, live with all my might ? I wish I had an opportunity of life into which I could throw all my soul ;—but what am I and my little place ? I know I am not living with all my heart.” But you may ! You may, if you are willing to learn Jesus’ secret, and to find your

life while losing it. You may not, indeed, live with all your heart and might in life up to its very close in the ways men often imagine that they can. Some have reached the heights of renown, with worlds lying at their feet, and yet their souls have been cold and restless as the winds. And souls large and satisfied have been won in the little valleys of this world. Whether we gain soul from life depends not so much upon the work great or small which God gives us to do, as it does upon the willingness with which we go to it, and the spirit which we keep while doing it. You remember it was not he who gave a cup of cold water only, but he who gave it in the name of a disciple, of whom Jesus said, "He shall in no wise lose his reward." Perhaps in the very effort it may cost us to put our hearts into little things—to do common things as disciples heartily as unto the Lord,—may be the exercise of soul which God has appointed for us that thereby we may gain capacity of spirit for the whole service of heaven. Right here it may help us to come back to our text. In your patience ye shall win your souls. Not many of those disciples to whom Jesus was then speaking became distinguished Christians. They had no great part to play in this world. All but three or four of the twelve are only names to us. But every man of them had a splendid chance to win soul by endurance. God gives to common people this opportunity of winning on earth souls large enough and good enough to appreciate by and by what heaven is. Patience may be the making of a soul. That regiment of men is held all the morning waiting under fire. They broke camp with enthusiasm enough

to sweep them up to any line of flame. But they are held still through long hours. They might show splendid courage in action ; but the orders are to stand. Only to stand still under fire ! But that day of endurance is enough to make a veteran of the recruit of yesterday. The discipline of waiting under life's fire makes veteran souls. Through the habit of endurance God trains often his best souls. If you keep up heart in your life of trial, by that patience what a soul for God's kingdom may be won !

The vital truth I have been trying thus to put into words would become self-evident, if we could brush for a moment this film of sense from our spirits and see the souls of men as they are forming themselves in this world. If we could see the souls of men as they go about their lives here ; if we could behold how souls in men are living or dying ; then every word of Jesus' Gospel,—its awful warnings, its great benedictions,—would also be seen by us to be true to the life. Behold, there is a soul in a palace shrinking into itself ! There is a soul in a small place growing capable of all heaven ! Yonder comes a soul full of laughter and song, but its own light is going out in darkness. Thither goes a soul trembling along one of life's hard ways of duty, and before it, unseen, God's angel, and after it, into the gates of the city, more treasures than it has ever dreamed of. There is a soul bending to its appointed work in the world, and in its humble dutifulness becoming strong in grace, equal at length to the companionship of the sons of God in their high tasks. And there, withdrawn from the world, in a sick-chamber, waiting quietly, almost

alone in old age, is a soul becoming seasoned and fragrant, and, lo! through suffering and waiting it has won from life what power to receive a whole heaven of sunny peace! How different life must look—how different what we call sometimes its strange providences must look—to the eye of one above who can see souls, and how they are forming for the endless life! And our own souls—is this world absorbing and exhausting them, or by the grace of God are we transmuting all our work and experience of life into more soul and sweeter? My friends, am I not bringing to you from this word of the Lord a very simple yet all-sufficient test for everything you are doing or planning in your lives? Can I acquire soul by it? Be sure, any course of life which causes any shrinkage of soul is not right. The open Christian life is constant enlargement of heart. Long ago the Hebrew poet looked up, and saw that the soul that runs in the way of the Lord's commandments is enlarged. "Be ye also enlarged," said an Apostle, in Jesus' name. His Gospel does not come to you and me with a close system of restrictions confronting us on every hand with unnatural restraints. Christ does for us what Satan offered to do for Christ, but never had the power to do;—he gives us all the kingdoms of this world, because he gives us receptive souls and pure hearts for all God's works and worlds. All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. You shall be disciples of the Divine Man. You are here for a little while to procure for yourselves souls, and to help others win their souls. God's Spirit is here with you to give you hearts in sympathy with all Godlike things. Grieve not that

Holy Spirit. Beware of anything which helps kill soul. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Acquire soul ! Let us be more than content with life, let us glory rather even in its trial and tribulation, because we may gain every day soul from it,—more soul and sweeter !

XI.

JESUS' METHOD OF DOING GOOD.

"But Jesus perceiving their reasonings, answered and said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?"—LUKE v. 22-23.

MY sermon this morning has grown out of some thoughts upon life which came to me while attending this last week the opening of the present criminal term of our Superior Court. I thought here in this court-room are represented so many forces which go to make the world what it is. The honorable Court, its officers, and array of counsel, represent certain conservative forces in that complex thing which we call life. The idlers upon the benches with nothing better to do than to look on, represent certain other forces of society of which they are the products. And the prisoners arraigned for trial represent also more than their wretched selves; they stand for certain forces which go to make life what it is. Many of those prisoners were boys. Their misdemeanors were their own acts for which they must be put to plead; but those boys are themselves also resultants of certain forces at work in human life. A regular docket of criminals, and a regular proportion of boys among them indicate certain forces in society operating with something like uniform causation.

Some very serious inquiries are brought before us when we look behind persons to the forces which are weaving life, and marring, while they make, its pattern. There is a certain regularly recurring outcome of misery, want, and crime. That docket of the court stands for an almost constant waste in the process of human life. These human forces work wastefully. There are lost lives. Must such waste and loss run on forever? The criminal classes indicate the worst waste of human forces; but by no means all the loss of power in life. Not only at the bottom, but at the top, and all through human society, there is mal-adjustment of forces, friction, and consequent waste. We speak in a familiar but expressive phrase of the wear and tear of life. What shall ever restore the harmony of forces, and make life do perfect work?

The question suggested by that hour in a court-room was, what power shall be beforehand with these products of crime? And this question once started takes wider scope: Is there any one reorganizing force of human life? Human life is one vast problem of forces;—is it only the dreamer who would labor and pray for the perfect adjustment of life's forces to perfect work? Or do Christians mean something real when they pray, "Thy kingdom come?" Look at this wear and waste of life more closely. The trouble is not merely that there are so many loose ends of life; but the forces which ought to work together and weave life harmoniously after one good pattern, and under one law, are all in confusion. Things human do not work together for good. Is this all, then, which we may hope to do,—

to tie up with our charities a few of life's loose ends? to ease a strain here, and to help life run over a difficulty there? to stop one waste to-day, and beware of another point of friction to-morrow? to run with our help from this want of humanity to the next, while nevertheless the great machine of the world goes grinding and groaning on, throwing some for a moment to the top, crushing others at the bottom, and leaving ruins of men and wrecks of homes all along its way? I can see no better prospect than this—no hope for the readjustment of this complex of human forces to happier results—unless somewhere among the forces which are making history I can discover a power great enough to be the centre and motor of all others—the one power around which society can be reorganized and life harmonized for perfect work.

Coming from that court-room with such thoughts in mind, I opened the New Testament and fell upon the chapter which I have read as our lesson this morning. There, too, I thought, in that house in Capernaum were represented the forces which are weaving and breaking human life. Some of the familiar powers of this world are met under that roof. We read "there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem." These were the conservators of morals and the law. They represented the forces of commandments, restraints, customs, and traditions. Then a victim of the palsy was let down into this group of powers. His helpless paralysis brings also the destructive powers of life tangibly into their midst. His body was a living

image of death. Thus the forces of natural and moral evil were thrown together with the conservative powers of Israel, and with the many mixed motives and tendencies of human nature, in that pushing multitude who crowded the hall, and spoiled the air, in that house in Capernaum.

But in the midst of these common forces of life, there is present another Power such as the world has not seen before. Calm, self-centred, waiting his hour, this Power of God stands in the midst of this multitude of the powers of this world. The simple narrative of the Gospel—too simple to have been invented—describes the appearance of a higher force, its method of working, its immediate result. The narrative names it the power of the Lord to heal with Jesus Christ. One other force, indeed, besides those just mentioned, comes in and quietly works with this healing power of the Lord. It is a not altogether unknown force of human life. It is one of the quietest and least obtrusive, but one of the most persistent forces of human nature. Kings have sought to crush it out with armies; but, though trampled under foot of men, it has sprung up again unconquered. No flames have been able to quench it; no sufferings have broken its strength; it is mightier than the sword; yet it may be hidden in a woman's heart;—I speak of the power of faith, invisible to the multitude which crowded that house in Capernaum, but which was revealed at once to Jesus who saw the faith of the men who let the sick of the palsy down through the roof. Such, then, are the forces of the problem of life,—scribes, doctors of the law, the multitude of

human wants crowding together, faith letting a palsied man down through the roof, and One in the midst of whom the evangelist bears witness, "The power of the Lord was with him to heal."

If we take the problem which I brought from the court-room back to this scene narrated in the Gospels, the question as to the forces of life will resolve itself for us directly into this inquiry: Does Jesus of Nazareth in the midst of that multitude, and before that palsied man, represent a power sufficient to reorganize humanity, and to bring forth from life perfect work? Is Jesus in the midst of all known human and social forces the harmonizing and healing power of God? If he is, we need no better reason for worshipping him. If the power to reorganize life harmoniously is with the Man who stood conscious of divine mastery over all the powers represented in that house in Capernaum, then we need no further reason for making a religion of his Gospel.

Let me remark here that in this method of approach to Christ and Christianity we are coming to it in a most characteristic Scriptural way. For the New Testament conception of Christ and his Gospel is pre-eminently a conception of power. It is not a saving truth, but a saving power which has come to men in Christ. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Those Apostles felt the crushing might of the world-powers. Life to them was a wrestling with principalities and powers. The powers of evil were in their experience very real and personal. Consequently their conception of Christ's Gospel is formed, not in the mould of wisdom

or philosophy, but of power. Run over in a concordance the passages of the New Testament cited under the word power, and see how the original Apostolic form of Christianity was moulded in the experience of redemptive power. From the beginning Jesus' preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom was with power. The seventy received power over all hurtful things. The farewell word of the risen Lord to the wondering disciples was: "All power is given unto me." The promise of the Holy Ghost was a Pentecost of power. The first martyr was known as a man full of faith and power. The missionary Apostle knew that his poor human speech was in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. And so on through the epistles the ever-recurring note, struck with no uncertain sound, is, The Gospel is the power of God. This certainly is the impression which that man of Nazareth, who stood once in that throng of conflicting life-forces at Capernaum, made upon those who saw him, and left indelibly stamped upon the world,—the impression of power;—the power of God was with him to heal.

If we seek thus to enter into the original Apostolic possession of the Gospel of Christ as the power of the Lord with men, the narrative of Jesus' healing the sick of the palsy will let us at once into the method and sufficiency of Jesus' mastery over life. Consider then for a moment the method of Jesus' working as disclosed by this narrative. The first thing which he did was not the thing which he was expected by men to do. His first word seemed remote from the thing needing then and there to be done. The friends of that palsied man

expected the famed miracle-worker to heal him; and instead Jesus said only, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." There was a practical work to be done, a man wanting help. And although his friends believed that Jesus might restore him, he seems to forget the man's great physical need, and as one thinking of something else, and looking far away, he says, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." Then those doctors of the law, seeing no sign wrought, begin to reason about Jesus' word; and the more they think of it, the more improbable and far-fetched it seems to them, until, as they reason over it, they are forced by their Pharisaic logic to conclude that such a word from any man is nothing less than blasphemy against God, "for who can forgive sins, but God alone?" That was not the first nor the last time that ecclesiastical logic has drawn a correct circle of reasoning by which the living Truth has been shut out. Jesus stood for the moment looking upon the disappointed faces of his friends, and meeting the cruel eyes of his enemies. He was to be the Messiah; and a palsied man lay helpless before him, and he had spoken a far-off, ineffectual word. Where, then, is the power for the mastery of life? Must we look for another? But Jesus knew which of all forces working on this earth is the greatest force; and he was not self-deceived. He knew the higher truth which the Pharisees, who reasoned when they should have learned, did not perceive. He knew that his word of divine forgiveness, which seemed remote from the very present need of that palsied man, and which to the Pharisees was idle as a breath of air, was nevertheless the force of forces for the healing

of the world. He knew how to begin his work among men, before any form of suffering, with a word which should bring down to the soul of man's need the power of the heart of God. The multitude looked on and saw the momentary failure, as it seemed, of the Christ of God. "But Jesus perceiving their reasonings, answered and said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?" Which is easier? Which is the greater force—the love of God forgiving sin, or the miracle of healing? Jesus began with the greatest work. Jesus began by linking all his daily works of goodness in with the one supreme motive-force of goodness: all which he came to do, and which needed to be done in the world, he bound directly upon this divine motive-power of love forgiving the sin of the world. Notice the unmistakable contrast between Jesus' judgment of his own good work, and the popular opinion in that house in Capernaum. Which is easier? Jesus asks, looking round from face to face of friend and foe, with the smile of a gracious triumph brightening the pity of his eye,—Which is easier? "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he said unto him that was palsied), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house." The miracle, as it seemed to the people, was not the greater work which Jesus knew he was sent to accomplish. The physical miracle followed easily and naturally upon the diviner power of God's love which Jesus was conscious of possessing and exercising over the might of evil, when he said, "Man, thy sins are for-

given thee." The people, when they saw the lesser work done—the miracle of healing,—not comprehending the power of God then and there present upon the earth and working first the greater work of the forgiveness of sin, were amazed and filled with fear, and said, "We have seen strange things to-day." And this opinion of the people must be our opinion of these miracles, if we do not know Jesus himself any better than those doctors of the law at Capernaum had learned Christ. We can only say of his mighty works, These are strange things!—unless we have learned from Jesus himself what the supreme powers of this universe are; unless we have learned to estimate the forces of this universe according to Jesus' own spiritual science of them. Which is easier, the divine victory of love over souls which have freely sinned, or the working of God's healing power down among the lower forces of things? If we live and think altogether down upon the lower planes of nature, knowing gravitation and the attractions of matter, but unlearned in the heart's knowledge of the first and higher forces of life, and ignorant as the brutes that perish of the primal law and supreme power of love, then of course all Jesus' life and work will be a thing incredible; we have not gained any experience to which it may seem natural. We must be skeptics concerning everything supernatural until we have learned by heart a little of what Jesus knew of the larger and diviner forces of things; until, moved and swayed in our own lives by the great spiritual powers, we can believe also in the divine dynamics of the universe.

The man who cannot believe in miracles may be right

from the level of his experience. He has taken an earthly plane from which to look ; and he is looking the wrong way, down from his own brain into the earth, and not up from his own free soul into the heavens towards the living God. He may be right from his point of view. We cannot, indeed, believe in mere wonders. We cannot believe in anything which we cannot bring into some relation to our experience, and under some law, or rational order of things. If we are unwilling to trust our own souls in their consciousness of spiritual life, we certainly can have little faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God. Begin by defining the whole nature of things so as to leave spirit and God out, and you ought consistently to fly in the face of history, and to deny everything which you cannot put together out of these poor, earthly materials in your dead mechanism of a universe. To the man, in a word, who only believes in the lower and worst half of himself, his body, Jesus cannot be the Son of man from God. I do not dispute, therefore, with the logic, but with the experience which pronounces his incarnate glory and mighty works incredible. But if our own hearts and souls have ever taught us more than our eyes can see, or our hands touch ; if we have once in any moment of free thought, or power of spiritual purpose, known ourselves to be more than bodies of dust, bound to the unceasing treadmill of things ; if we have ever in the mastery of spirit over things learned that the first and final powers of this universe are in nature but above it, spiritual, divine, eternal ; then we may understand better Jesus' miracles ; we may look down upon them as he did from the higher

plane of forces upon which he lived, and see that they are the orderly effects of higher causes, and are no more miracles to the power of God, and no more violations of his laws of nature, than are our volitions when they work downwards and outwards in our interference of spirit with the course of things.

You dip an oar into the water, and, lo! a strange thing happens;—the uniform course of the stream is one way; and at the dip of the oar in the stream you cross the current, and go up stream. Nature never could have floated anything up stream. The course of nature for that palsied man was down to death. Nature never stops and turns back upon itself. Who, then, is this that works against the stream of things? Impossible! All those long river-grasses bend downwards with the current. They cannot turn and float the other way, unless the whole stream flows backwards. The person then who reports that he saw those grasses turning a moment and bending the other way, contradicts our uniform experience of that stream. The river may run on forever, but the miracle of a blade of grass turned against its current it can never produce. The logic is good, provided the stream and the grasses are all. But a higher force chooses to launch itself on the river; and in the free exercise of its own power it moves up against the stream; lo! the grasses bend before it, and the dip of the oar from above breaks the water into ripples without reversing the stream. Its nature is not violated by your boat in it. The law of its flowing simply obeys the higher law of your motion across it. A miracle would be impossible if nature had to work it. Nature is a con-

tinuity of causes. It is one stream throughout. But who knows that God ever made nature so as to prevent himself from moving through it? Does the dip into the water of that white bird-wing down from out the sky violate the law which the flowing river must obey? No more would the descent of the angel of the Lord into the lives of men.

We need not stumble, then, at the miracle, as the multitude regarded it, but which was only a lesser, secondary work in Jesus' estimation of it. It was perfectly natural to him. Before the miracle, and greater than the apparent miracle, was the power of God on earth forgiving sin. And this greater, nay, should it not be called this greatest power of God, is the all-sufficient power for life. It alone shall bring forth the new creation, and cause life at last to turn out perfect work.

I cannot linger now upon the signs and evidences of the reorganizing efficiency of this power in life; let me simply invite you to find the proof of it by observing it in the closest possible contact with real life. Go back and down until you come as close as you can to the real powers which make and mar life. Study, also, not in the books, but in the closest possible application to life all the healing powers which men may bring to bear upon life. And as in this study of real life we learn what sin is, and what man's first need is, then remember Jesus' question, "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?" Learn from the heart of the wants of the world the divine sufficiency of Jesus' greater work. The first word of the Spirit calling forth

the new creation from our social chaos is the word of the forgiveness of sins. It is a word greater than all our charities, for it is the new-creative word which God only can speak on earth. Does this seem to you in your practical philanthropy a Gospel too remote from the woes of men? So is the sun remote from the dead fields; but the sun in the heavens is the first power of life on the earth. God's method of saving the world is, first of all, by shining upon it. Social regeneration begins in the Gospel of divine forgiveness. I say this with those wretched prisoners behind that bar in mind; with the thought before me of that mass of struggling, fermenting humanity heaped up to fester and to die in the alleys of our cities; with some knowledge, too, of the emptiness of much gilded happiness, and the dead men's bones in those whited sepulchres of homes which some passing by upon the streets may envy. That word which Jesus first of men dared speak; which he had authority from the Father to speak, when they laid a wreck of a human form at his feet, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee;"—that is the Gospel of power for our world; that is the creative word of the new and happier order of humanity. Spin your reforms around any other principle of power than this, and they will fail, or, at best, result only in partial good. The Gospel of the love of God forgiving the sin of the world is man's first need. Our regeneration is in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Too remote, do you say, from men's wants, this word of Jesus, always repeated by his Church? Men and women want bread; they want clothing and coal; they

want work and means ; they want rooms with air enough in them to breathe ; they want recreations and rest ; they want a better chance at life ; they want protection from the cruel passions which prey upon them ; the people want more social justice, more honesty up and down through society and between all classes of men ; they want right laws scientifically made, and executed in righteousness ; they want deliverance from the demons of demagogism, faction, and vice whose name is legion ; they want many immediate, necessary, and most practical reforms,—and the Church invites them to hear a Gospel preached, and to worship an unseen Saviour from sin !

I am only repeating what hundreds of people struggling with life, and smarting under grievances, are saying in their hearts of our churches. I am only repeating in the language of present wants what that throng of people felt in their hearts, when Jesus himself disappointed the multitude by letting for a moment the wretched, palsied man lie helpless at his feet, while he spake a remote, heavenly word of forgiveness. But as in that case soon appeared, Jesus Christ was right in the way he chose to begin his work, and the people were all wrong. He did the harder thing first, and the easier thing next. And the method of the Church, following Christ's, is profoundly right. It is practically true. The Gospel of divine forgiveness we must put first ; our benevolences second. Sin is first to be mastered ; then suffering is more easily healed. Go to the bottom of all these human wants of which I have just been speaking, and the beginning of them was somebody's sin. The sting of death is sin. Consider again those prisoners—those boy-tramps

whose names were called in the criminal docket. I know not who sinned, that boy or his parents. I know that somebody's sin is come to judgment there. Walk down that alley of crowded misery. I know not who sinned, that wretched outcast, or some gentleman's son I may have met in a ladies' drawing room ; I do know that somebody's sin is the serpent which has poisoned that life ; and that loathsome heap of pauperism has been swept up and gathered from the sins of the world. I do not know who the sinners are ; but the sin I know ; it is the characteristic thing of this world. An angel flying unseen on some errand of God through our skies would know this earth not as the famed world of poetry and art, of science and railroads, and man's mastery over elemental forces, but as the world into which sin has come, and the world marked with the sign of the Cross. And seeing all its woes and shames, such ministering spirits might sing, Praise be to God who has not sent us thither to toil in vain, to bind up one wound, while sin opens another ; to reform one evil while sin plots another ; to pluck one suffering child out of the fire while sin draws in another ; to wage an endless warfare of merciful deeds against an endless outbreak of flaming passions ; to build vineyards over volcanoes ;—praises be to God who has taken the whole world into his love, and gone to the source of all its history of evil with the power of his forgiving grace ;—Peace on earth ! good will toward men ! glory to God in the highest !

We are called to live in the power of the Master. A real Christian is so much character-force for the healing of life. If you, who are still young, wish to count for

something in this world, you may find in the Master's name and Spirit the secret and source of power. You may be in Christ's grace forces made after the power of an endless life. The Christlike soul is power of God with man. It reigns while it serves. It finds its life while it loses it.

And let us keep always in mind God's method in Christ of doing good. The Lord's miracle needs to be continued and attested in all his churches,—first the Gospel of forgiveness, and then the healing charity. Christ's way of doing good is first by shining upon the world,—not by condemning it, but by shining out of his divine love upon all men. We are sent in his name that we, too, out of hearts made bright by the hope of his Gospel, may shine everywhere upon life. “Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

XII.

THE IMPERATIVES OF JESUS.

"But I say unto you."—MATT. v. 44.

JESUS speaks in imperatives. He commands human nature. The sermon on the Mount is a sermon in the imperative mood. It is gracious, but it is imperative. Its blessings are commandments. Jesus reconstructs by his supreme personal authority the law and traditions of the people. It is enough for his command that he speaks it. "Ye have heard that it hath been said: but I say unto you." "Verily, verily I say unto you." He does not argue with men; he commands them. He speaks words of invitation, but his invitations have behind them the imperatives of truth. His word, "Come unto me," is both an invitation of heavenly grace and a command of duty. His words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" "Blessed are the pure in heart," and so on, are words of supreme authority as well as promises of grace. Jesus never speaks for himself or for his kingdom one apologetic word. He makes demands of righteousness and truth upon us.

Recall, in the first place, the range and extent of Jesus' imperative speech. Jesus keeps up to his own superior level of command upon all occasions and before all men. He does not speak one moment with commanding voice, and another in beseeching tones. He

always commands. The occasion never comes for him to drop the clear, gracious imperatives of his daily speech, and to use such words of apology as we all at times must use over our work and our endeavors. For more than thirty years this man lived among men, but not even in his conversation with his chosen friends was there ever heard falling from his lips one syllable of apology for himself or his cause. Glance again over these Gospels, and observe with what clear and ceaseless consistency Jesus' speech keeps up to the great imperatives of his kingdom. Like the successive strokes of a bell ringing out over the hills and down the valleys, these imperatives of Jesus sound forth across the ages : Repent ; believe ; Come ; Follow me ; Take up your cross ; Seek first the kingdom of God ; Keep my commandments.

Men like us occasionally may assume without offense an imperative mood in certain relations of life, or before others who for the time may be dependent upon us for direction or support. But beyond these occasional and limited duties, the position of command becomes a presumption and offense in men. We are created equal. Yet on all occasions, and before all men, Jesus kept his attitude of command, while he lost no human grace or benignancy by his constant and unmistakable attitude of authority over men. He went into the temple, and stood among the rulers of the people as their Lord. He opened the Scriptures in the synagogue, and interpreted the law and the prophets as the Master even of those sacred rolls. He spoke with authority over Moses. He walked the beach of Gennesaret, and when the

people came crowding around him, he taught as one having authority. He talked with a wilful woman at Jacobs' well, and she who had had seven husbands, and yet could carry her head high through that village in Samaria, finds her pride broken, and is at last humbled before the Stranger, who quietly told her all things which ever she had done.

In the still evening a master of Israel comes to him ;—now surely he who through the day and among the people has kept up a brave show of knowledge of the truth, and yielded his authority to none who questioned him, will acknowledge in private conversation with a master of Israel his own questionings and limitations, and the two sitting together upon the house-top under the stars will be but as children of the infinite mystery from which we are born. But hardly had the courteous salutation of the Rabbi been addressed to Jesus, when instead of the humble and half deprecating answer which would have been for any man of us the natural answer, clear and full upon the night-air sounds Jesus', Verily, verily I say unto you !—to be repeated again as the Rabbi in astonishment asks the question of bewilderment, How can these things be? and to be followed and enforced by the supreme commandment, Ye must be born again !

Although Jesus may maintain this constant attitude of command before the Jews, even before the rulers and chief priests, can he stand in the calm imperatives of his kingdom before the Roman and his power? Pilate asked him, "Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king!" We should like to

have seen him then ;—even the Roman saw something which he had never seen before in that clear eye of truth fixed upon him ;—Jesus looked a king ! Pilate would have released him. They put the crown of thorns upon him, and nail him to the cross. Now, while the people mock him, shall not his kingliness fall from him ? Now shall not he who has lived as Master die as one of the thieves between whom he is crucified ? Nay, his kingliness never forsook him. Dying, he reigns. Crucified, he is the King who with one word of divine authority opens paradise to the over-awed penitent by his side. His last word of prayer has no human weakness in it ; it is a prayer of authority, as well as of infinite pity, the prayer of one who knows he has but to speak and he shall be heard ;—“ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” “ And when Jesus had cried ”—not in trembling tones of our human weakness and mortality, but “ with a loud voice ”—with voice even in death so commanding that the centurion standing by said, “ Certainly this was a righteous man ! ”—“ when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit : and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”

Consider, further, not only that Jesus met with his supreme imperative all men, and on every occasion, even in death, was commanding ; but also mark well the nature and significance of those relations of life, and those elements of human nature, over which Jesus quietly assumed and always maintained mastery. The miracles of Jesus are not the greatest of his wonderful works. It is a greater assumption of power to exercise authority

over the higher principles and laws of our human nature than it is to claim authority over the winds and the waves. The miracle in the realm of the physical will seem to me a secondary and lesser thing, if I can once allow the greater marvel of Jesus' authority over the human heart and its most permanent affections. If indeed he has authority to stand above the natural laws of our affections, to say to any mother before the cradle of her child, or to any child upon its mother's bosom,—I am diviner than this; of such child-likeness of spirit is my kingdom; love me more than all;—if this miracle-worker has authority to enthrone himself above all human affections as the Lord of hearts and the king of souls;—then indeed it would be an easy thing for him to heal the sick, or to make a great calm in the centre of a storm, or to raise the dead. If I must worship as One from above the man who walks in the name of God the streets of Capernaum, I need no longer wonder that a woman should feel coming to her diseased flesh a healing virtue from a touch upon the hem of his garment. The lesser physical results or miracles of Jesus' presence are but the natural consequences which might be expected, if he be himself the Son of God. The miracle of history is not the virtue which goes forth from Christ along the edge and border of his life where it touches nature and natural sequences as he passes by; but the Man himself in his spiritual kingliness, Jesus himself in his authority over the souls of men, is the supernatural truth of the ages.

Observe with what calm consciousness of right Jesus assumes this authority which belongs to God alone over

human hearts. Observe how he never lowers for one moment his authority over souls, even when he condescends to the friendships of Bethany and the daily intimacy of the twelve. The imperative of Jesus' presence is always felt by those nearest him, even though he veils it from them, and will not say unto them as yet many things which he sees they cannot bear. Jesus' superhuman authority is most profoundly felt by those who know him best. To the disciples Jesus was not brother, not companion, not friend, or rather he was all these as he was more than these to them ; to Peter and John, to all the twelve, even to Judas who hastily betrayed him, Jesus was Master. What saith the Master ? What will the Master do ? His word ended their questionings by the way. His word decided their next day's journey. His word was always law. They followed ; he went before them in the way ; the disciples were amazed, yet still they followed Jesus in the way. This supreme mastery over human wills and human hearts, over life's most sacred and commanding relationships and friendships, characterized Jesus from his boyhood to his cross. You have sometimes let drop the sacred page as you have read how his parents sought him and found him teaching in the temple, and you have wondered whether that strange answer to Mary was the perfect example of the dutifulness of childhood. Mary wondered too ; but recognizing already in the child Jesus something diviner than her mother's love and its sacred claims, she hid that saying of the holy One in her heart. Were he only the child with no higher authority over our human relationships beginning to lead him from his birth, then would

that scene and that answer be strange indeed. But even the child Jesus exercised authority over the relationship of childhood. He was more than the child whom his parents found. And you remember how afterwards when some one said, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee," another word of authority over life's nearest and holiest relationships fell at once from his lips: "But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

You could not utter such strange words to your mother. They would be blasphemy upon our lips in our homes. They were pure, divine imperatives upon the blessed lips of the Christ. He could speak them because he is greater than all. He puts himself above all homes and all natural affections because in him is the truth of all love and the completion of all human relationships. We have seen him in the temple of the Jews casting out the money-changers, and exercising authority by his own right in his Father's house. But herein is a more marvellous thing. He comes to the homes of men. He enters the temple of the human heart. And there, amid its most sacred associations, over its purest affections, he sets his throne, and says, I am Saviour and Lord.

Thus far I have been dwelling upon the range and extent of the authority exercised by Jesus. We learn

from the Gospels that it was universal in its extent, and supreme in its height. No man escapes from it; and there is nothing in human nature which is not put beneath it. Before the reason, the conscience, and the heart of man Jesus stood declaring himself to be the truth, the way, and the life.

We must needs ask one another, therefore, in the second place, concerning the nature or right of this supremacy of the Christ. Of what kind this authority of Jesus is we find only partially explained in the Gospels which set forth its power and right. We cannot fully comprehend it in our study of it. The authority of Jesus over human nature and history resembles the lordship of the sun over the earth;—the world feels it from centre to circumference; every fruitful field rejoices in it, and this earth would be indeed worthless and dark without it; but we can only make guesses at the riddle of its gravitation and its light; and while any child knows that it is, the wisest can only declare in part, in very little part, how it is. Yet Christian science must evade no problem of thought, and we have no right as Christian learners to stop thinking in any direction until we can think no farther. Something of the nature of Jesus' supreme authority we may discern. One ever-present type and illustration of what the Lord Jesus Christ is to this universe we have within us in conscience. We are commanded by another than ourselves within ourselves. That is conscience. It is ourself, yet not ourself. It is a higher self. It is something in us, yet not of us. Philosophers cannot define it; physiologists always lose it when they

would find it in lesser things ; but we know it. Almost in infancy the child learns it,—I know not whether as a part of the human fact of love in which it is born and comes gradually to know itself, or whether directly from the inspiration of God himself who is before and beneath all our human love and life ;—but, be it as a word of God taught through human experience, or as a word of God whispered anew to each soul in its own inner ear for God's voice, certain it is that conscience is the best known fact of human life. We know something of what matter and body are, but we know better what conscience and its laws of duty are. Conscience is the first, and last, and constant element of our being ; and though we deny it, we cannot destroy it. We must rise and sleep, we must eat and drink, we must work and rest, with conscience ; and when all other things pass from us, and this world becomes to the dying eye the shadow which it is, through death, and up the steps of the judgment-throne, conscience shall go with us, our soul's first friend, and last judge—our condemnation or our justification, so long as we are living souls.

But the conscience of man, supreme over everything else within us, recognizes its light and Lord in the Christ from God. That is the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Jesus Christ is the incarnate conscience of humanity. His judgment is true. All judgment is committed unto him. Conceive of that other self in you—conscience ;—conceive of that other self in your neighbors and friends—conscience ;—conceive of that higher self in humanity—conscience—as finally and fully embodied and incarnate in the Son

of man. In that conception of a perfect, incarnate conscience you have one means of understanding the supreme authority of Jesus Christ. Why should not God enter in and possess once for all the conscience of man? Jesus is the final conscience of the world; who, then, but he shall be the final judge?

To say this much, however, is by no means to comprehend the Christ of these Gospels in his whole authority. Even conscience is not all of man's nobility. There is running through this life a law often broken, often disappearing, yet ever reappearing, and always blessing those who see it and trust themselves to it, even the law of love. Consider all love as gathered up into one pure soul; conceive of love as concentrating its divinest forces in one strong life; conceive of love as perfectly embodied in one person and finally incarnate,—and you have another means of understanding the nature of the supremacy of Jesus Christ. His kingdom is the reign of love. And as conscience finds in love the fulfillment of its law, so the glory of Sinai passes into the glory of the cross.

Yet this is not all of the truth of Jesus' person and supremacy as we see it reflected in these Gospels. Such are the human types of what he is; conscience and love are the human realities by which we may approach his divinity. Were Jesus only man's conscience in its perfect integrity, were he only man's power of love in its complete realization, he would be worthy of our following as Master and Lord. But he is more. The disciples evidently believed him to be more. His work in history proclaims him to be more. We leave always

something out of the impression of the Christ upon man, and do not find the one solution of all his mighty works, unless we believe that Jesus stood for more than our perfect conscience, and represented upon this earth more than the concentrated and absolutely pure love of the heart of our humanity. "I and my Father," he said, "are one." He claimed to stand in this world for God. He represented in his own Person our God. He was to our human nature the revelation of God. We are to know in him what God who made the world is; what God in eternity thinks; how God beyond the stars regards us,—our lives, our sorrows, our graves;—as Jesus himself said, we are to know the Father, as we see him. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

And yet the more human thought which we have just entertained shall be still our best help as we worship before this divine authority of the person of Jesus Christ. For we indeed know nothing of the metaphysics of deity. But we may and do have some moral knowledge of God in Christ. We have confessed before Christ that he is the authority of conscience, he is conscience itself. And now we make haste to add, he is not our human conscience merely; he is the righteousness of God with man. He is in his own person the express image of God's eternal righteousness. Behold the righteousness of God in Christ's life and death! Let the angels look down and adore it; let the world bow before it and confess it! He is God's righteousness condemning the sin of the world, and submitting even

to death because of it. He is the incarnate conscience of God. And God is love; Christ, then, is the eternal love in which the worlds were created and the morning stars rejoiced, entering into our history to be with us to its end, stooping to our sorrows, bearing our burdens, suffering in our stead. Christ is incarnate love—God's own infinite and eternal love found in fashion as a man, touched with a feeling of our infirmities.

Such is the authority of Jesus Christ over human consciences and human hearts. He speaks from God to man. He is God with man. He is the revelation of God in human nature. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen. And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." "Before Abraham was, I am."

And what man or woman of us is there here who knows enough to contradict Jesus Christ? Who of us has learned from our own knowledge of nature's shadows ever flitting before our eyes, or from our own consciences mixed with sins, or from our own hearts which have not been from infancy always unselfish and pure as heaven,—who of us has learned anything to warrant us in setting up our thought of life against Jesus' thought of it? our desire for happiness against the blessings of Jesus' Gospel? our plan for immortality against Jesus' revelations of the way of eternal life? Who of us has authority to contradict the Master of the disciples, the Christ of the Gospels, the Lord of history, the Son of the Father, the Creator of the World, the Judge of all?

We may bring our questionings and our doubts to him.

We may lay our sciences before his wisdom of God. We may say in his discipleship, Lord, we do not understand ; the night is dark ; whither thou goest we know not. We may wait in his presence for more light. If the child may run with its childish questioning to an earthly parent, I am sure we can bring all our foolish knowledge of things to his presence, and hope some day for the full answer that shall make all plain. But first of all and above all we should bring obedience. He stands as Master at the crossing of the ways of our lives. The decision of discipleship is the first duty before the divine authority of Jesus Christ. My friends, we need to lay our souls bare of all delusions in that presence. Christ does command us in the name of God. He speaks to us in the imperative mood. His Gospel is an immediate and constant demand upon human nature. He will not receive honor from men. God in heaven does not need our worship ; and God in Christ, and in his work of Christianity on earth, does not need the patronage of our poor lives. Jesus Christ in his Church can do without us better than we can do without him in his Church. God who created the worlds has made his moral creatures capable of worshipping him, and he permits them in view of his glory and perfections to enlarge their hearts in his worship ; but he needs our incense of praise no more than the sun in the sky needs the fragrance of the valleys. Yet all things that have life must rejoice in its shining. We need to offer our hearts to him. Jesus Christ in the name of the Father, representing all his gracious Godhead, goes before his Church,

and is establishing on earth his kingdom in righteousness. We may own the authority of divine righteousness and love incarnate, if we please ; we may find our lives, as we never found them or can find them in the world, in his kingdom if we will ; but God in Christ on earth can do without us and accomplish all his work of grace ; and God above does not need a single one of us in order to fill his heaven full of happy love. It is all condescension and free grace on his part to open the door for such as we, and to give us room among the just.

And do we not all of us need to be most thoroughly commanded by something higher and better than ourselves ? We go hither and thither, we make no permanent gain of life, we fall from our own possibilities, and lose worth and heart, unless we are commanded to our inmost souls by something greater and better than we ; unless in some single and supreme devotion we step forth like princes to our high calling, and pursue life with the steady tread of those who go forth to conquer. Oh ! we must first be commanded, body, and soul, and spirit, in order that we may reign upon thrones forever. We must obey that we may become kingly. We are all alike in this first necessity of our finite being ; men and women, all of us, are but as the brutes that perish, until we see something that commands us, and we arise, and follow it like a star. You, young men and women, be sure you cannot find your lives until you lose them in something that is as a worship to your souls. Idle, idle, is it for any of us to seek life in aimlessness and disobedience to the heavenly vision. Life is nothing without the power and purpose of conscience and love in it.

We are no better than the leaves that fade and are blown about by the winds of heaven, unless we gain our own souls through obedience to something worthy of all our minds and all our hearts and all our strength. Behold! the man! Behold your King! Behold God manifest in the flesh! Hear his commanding word! His blessing for you and me is in the imperative duty of discipleship. Leave all, and follow me.

XIII.

METHODS OF LIVING.

"And he said unto them, *Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.*"—JOHN viii. 23.

THERE are three methods of living in this world; we may live from beneath, or from within ourselves, or from above. I do not mean to say that men and women are divided into three distinct classes according to these three definite methods of life. We none of us do live consistently in this world after one single method of life. There has been but one self-consistent man in human history. Jesus' life followed but one method throughout. His character, like the coat which the soldiers divided, was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

But no other man is either wholly good, or consistently bad. What human character among men has ever crystallized according to one principle and law, without break or blemish? God's goodness makes it hard even for the wicked man to be consistently and always earthly, sensual, and devilish. And the sin of the world is dust and stain upon the garments of those who would journey as pilgrims and strangers here into that better country. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," is the confession even of the inspired and great-hearted apostle. Hence I do not invite you to look in

this confused world for examples formed in thorough consistency with either of these three methods of life. I do ask you to look upon life as it lies before us, and to discover in it these three distinct principles or laws of the formation or crystallization of human characters ; to consider whether there are really any other methods by which we may live than just these three ; and then studying these methods as thoroughly as you can in their vital truths, forces, and practical effects, to make conscious and deliberate choice between them.

I need only distinguish, however, the first mentioned method of life from beneath. We can easily recognize it, or any temptation in our own thoughts from its bottomless pit. The world has received Christian education enough to lead it publicly and before men at least to repudiate the method of the devil in life ; and even though many still cheat and steal, and bear false witness, and live for the gratification of their own lusts, they will not in the nominally Christian world be so bold as to follow openly their evil gods, build temples like the heathen to the idols of their own passions, or willingly acknowledge that in their grasping, intemperance, vices, and defalcations, they are doing the deeds of their father the devil. Christianity has, at least, dethroned Satan from open public recognition, if it has not banished the demons of private life.

The second method of life just mentioned is a very common one, and it is good so far as it goes. It contains much truth, and leads to many honorable works. It is the effort to live as a human being may best live in the powers of his own reason, and out of the motives of his

own heart. Not a few desire honestly and honorably to make the most of themselves and their circumstances, but without seeking or finding any help from above. Religion seems to them something distant and dark ; they seek to answer by their own efforts their own prayer of life, and to create, by such wisdom as they can master, their own providences in the world. Young men see characters which have rounded out into much human robustness and grace without a confessed religious faith ; and they think that a method of life sufficient for a strong manhood may be found in their own reasons and wills without religious consecration, or the prayer of faith ever at the heart of life. The motive-powers for life they would find, according to this human method of it, not in any hopes or fears of the hereafter, nor even in any lofty faiths in things unseen and eternal ; but in their own admiration for whatsoever things are right and of good report, in their own manly love, as they expect to maintain it, of the good and the true. I do not say that all such persons consciously and thoughtfully reduce thus their lives to their real principle or method, for one great trouble with us all is that we are too content to drift along with the general current of life around us, and do not determine thoughtfully the course we are following. This method, however, whether consciously or unconsciously pursued, is a common method of life in Christian lands. And let us cheerfully admit that it is good so far as it reaches. Life committed in a general way to truth and goodness may drift in happy directions. Persons whose idea of life is to develop themselves to the utmost of their own powers and oppor-

tunities, to make the most and the best of their lives, often reach admirable results. Our Christian faith need not make us color-blind to natural virtues. A thoroughly human life may be a ripe, rich thing. We like sometimes the flavor of it better than the harsh and crabbed virtue which may be the first-fruits of some life of deeper conscientiousness in its early exposure in a climate of stern religious beliefs. Only the former may already have reached its full, earthly ripeness, while the latter is the still bitter bud of some sweet, heavenly fruition.

Having acknowledged thus the fair fruits which we find growing sometimes upon this human, non-religious principle of living, if we turn now to the New Testament, we meet a difficulty in our text. The Scripture apparently fails to recognize this second, intermediate method of living. Yet Jesus certainly must have looked out upon life with as quick an appreciation of anything honest and fair in it as any of us can ever feel, and was he not always ready to see the good in men even where we are not quick to see it? He found the man worth saving even in the publican and sinner. But when he lays bare the principles of character; when he reduces human lives to their ultimate methods; he does not say there are three ways in which men live,—the way of sin from beneath, the way of goodness growing from within and blossoming by its own virtue into perfection,—and also the way of religion, or of goodness shining into us and through us from heaven. Jesus leaves out of his view of life altogether the middle way. He said, as he taught in the temple, "Whither I go, ye cannot come," and when the Jews wondered what he meant, he pointed

out with instantaneous decision two radically different courses of life which, because opposite, could never lead those who followed them into the same place. "And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." Perhaps, however, it may be said, Jesus in this text meant simply to oppose the falsehood which was dragging down the life of the Jews; and in some other passage he may have recognized and not condemned a method of life which certainly would not yield to the lower motives even though it does not profess to rise to the higher. But where in Jesus' conversation will you find recognized more than two fundamental principles and tendencies of life,—the one of this world and tending towards that which is beneath; and the other, like his own higher life, not of this world, and rising toward that which is above? The last written of the Apostolic epistles, which reveal the mind of Jesus as it was reflected in that disciple who leaned upon his bosom, almost startle us by the vividness of the constant contrast which they present between two methods and two states of life,—the one begotten of God, and confessing the Christ; the other having the spirit of anti-Christ, and not of God;—the one is light, love, and truth; the other is death, darkness, and a lie.

You see, then, the difficulty. When we close the Bible and look out candidly upon life, we observe a great deal of loveliness and goodness in the world growing apparently out of men's own consciences and hearts, without any special religious vitality in it. We cannot say, indeed, that there may not be some unconfessed secret of

God in it. I believe there is something from God in all human goodness. We observe, however, a way of living which we must recognize as a natural, human, manner of life, a life proceeding from man's own best nature, which method we do not find admitted when we open again the New Testament. One of two consequences, therefore, must be true : either human life is broader than the Gospel and cannot be wholly contained in it, or else the Gospel goes deeper than we have looked, and judges human nature, not by its present appearance or immediate wants, but by its real necessities and its final conditions.

This brings us, then, I submit, to a fair question which should not be evaded by any of us ;—which of these statements just put forth is true ? The Bible says there are two ways of life—one from God and unto God, the other of this world and unto death. Human experience says there is also a third possible way—a mid-way of life, neither diabolical nor saintly—neither down in the depths of sin, nor up on some height with God ;—and this midway of life seems to some to be the nearest and the easiest to follow in our present ignorance and scepticisms. I think I have stated the matter fairly and fully, and as it exists in the minds of many. They take the intermediate life ; or, at least, without any choice, or much thought, they find themselves in this midway of life, and are content for the present to follow it.

I wish to make the following observations upon this fact that two ways of life only are marked out in the Gospel, while a third way seems to be found in human experience. We should remember that Jesus in

his conversation with men was in the habit of going beyond all that is temporary and transient in human nature and conduct, and that his judgments of men and their ways of conducting themselves have reference to the radical principles and final issues of things. He has told us that he did not come to judge. "And yet if I judge, my judgment is true." Jesus judges life as one looking back upon it from beyond the years; he speaks to human nature as one seeing into the eternal principles and necessities of things. When Jesus, therefore, distinguishes between two opposite methods of life only, while human experience shows us a third way along which men are walking comfortably, and, so far as we can follow them, often safely, without slipping down to the bottom, or climbing either any difficult height;—then the question arises whether life can always go on, whether it can go on much farther than we can now see, in this half-way fashion? The question between the Gospel with its two ways, and human nature with its third way, reduces itself to this: Is not this intermediate way—this middle method between heaven above and hell below—a path which we should reasonably expect must come somewhere to a break, when he who would follow it further will be compelled to scale the height, or plunge into the abyss? Is this method of life at best but a temporary or provisional method? And if this be so, can it now be justified as a necessary or reasonable expedient for a life?

A man may say: "I admit that I must probably at some time take God into my account of life, and look eternity in the face; sometime, I suppose, I shall reach

a break in my path where I must stop short and go up or down ; but I have not gone so far as that yet ; I have the ever present actuality of this world to deal with now ;—that meets me in my office, and knocks at my door, and compels me to work for my living ; I must do the best I can with what is at hand ; when these unseen things shall come in sight, when God shall be a visible fact above my horizon, then I shall also take thought of God and eternity. Meanwhile I accept the middle way, as you call it, as a present reasonable expedient, or provisional working-plan of my life.”

Putting, accordingly, all other considerations for the moment one side, let us take this method on its own grounds, and consider well whether it is the best temporary, or even a necessary provisional method for a man's life. It is a great presumption at the outset against it that it is an expedient, and cannot possibly be the full, final method of an immortal soul. We certainly want, if we can, to strike now into a way of life which we can follow across all earthly events on and on forever. The Epicurean who says, Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die, is, at least, consistent in his self-stultification. He proceeds consistently to rob himself of soul and spirit, and to be nothing to-day but a satiated body which shall die to-morrow. But to say to Satan, Get thee behind me ! and not at the same moment to pray with the Christ, Our Father which art in heaven, puts a man at this disadvantage : he would cast out evil, and makes a struggle for his own soul, while he does not bring in any higher power to his life, and leaves out that hope of immortality and that love of the divinest things which are the inspiration

of a soul in its struggle for liberty. If it were necessary for us to do this, and simply with main force to hold on to our own bare conviction of truth and right without any sense of spiritual deathlessness in our hearts, and without any assurance of faith in the living God, or prayer for victory over the world to one who can help us overcome it;—then, indeed, this provisional method, this temporary expedient of self-preservation from evil, would be our duty, and alas! the whole duty of man. But it certainly will be a very serious disadvantage to your plan of life, if that plan must be held subject to death, and you expect to have to drop it entirely in the grave. As thinking, acting beings we want to plan our lives for ages, not for years. A purpose over which death is lord, is not a purpose of life sufficient for the spirit of a man. And who of us expects to live one single day after death without finding ourselves obliged to take God, and the whole kingdom of righteousness, into our account of life? “Do you expect to be here next year,” some one, it is said, asked of Rufus Choate towards the end of his life. “Yes,” replied the great advocate, “I expect to be here next year, and a hundred years, and a thousand years hence.” Such is the expectation of the spirit of a man. “The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.” Let the purpose of life then equal the expectation of man’s spirit. That is not a sufficient method of a life which does not reach forward at least a hundred, a thousand years hence. Put the dilemma in all its sharpness. If I am nothing but an animal which perishes, then I have no use for religion. Why should a brute

take counsel of a dream of spirit—of our strange dreams of things glorious or terrific, after it shall be nothing but dust? But could a mere brute have such human dreams of the spirit? If in any moments of my present existence I am conscious of a certain sense of spiritual deathlessness, am I not already living in inner contact with unseen things, which some day may be the visible outward reality of God round about me? It is only then a question of time for me when I must have to do with the revealed God; when I must have everything to do with religion. I cannot live fifty, a hundred, a thousand years hence still drifting on in unconcern about the greatest and final realities of this universe.

Let me not seek in the name of the Man of Truth to lead any one of you a step in life beyond the truth upon which you may stand. Some will willingly admit that it is a comparative disadvantage not to be able to take up their lives every morning afresh in a religious faith, and even wish they could believe as their mothers have trusted God, and in that faith been strong and glad;—but they say, “I must build my life up upon known facts, and of truths which experience can substantiate.” So be it. Give me no dream of fountains when my soul is athirst for the living God! Let me not see painted over the altar of the Church a picture of a feast of angels, when I hunger for the bread of life! Give me no make-believes for life! Give me positive facts to build into the substantial arch of a life! But if I can find the key-stone which shall make all complete, let me not be content to leave it untouched, not put in its place in my life, because life may be carried so high without it, and the

temporary scaffolding may hold all in place for the present. The only question for us is whether religion, whether the Gospel of Christ, does not bring to our hands the facts which are needed to make life entire? If so, we ought at once to use them. Is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the key-stone which completes all and secures all, and that with no temporary scaffolding of our construction, but with the righteousness of God?

It might be enough for my reasoning at this point simply to ask those of you who have been trying to live out your own lives honorably in this world without religion, to search deeply the living Scriptures of your own hearts, and to study the fresh daily Scriptures too of providence in this world, and to discover for yourselves whether there are not larger, higher, and diviner facts in present things than you can put under a microscope, or bring within the field of a telescope, or understand in any conceivable earthly mechanics of things. I might ask you to read me the secret of God in the grass beneath your feet, or to interpret the laws of reason in the primal motions of the heavens above. Nay, I might ask you to explain your own thought in which, as in a larger element, the heavens and the earth are contained. The present fact of the living God—where in this round of nature is it not pressed in upon our reason? in what passing phenomenon before our eyes is not the omnipresent mystery of God very near us? Feel your own pulse-beatings, and believe in the living God! You cannot explain whence came that pulsing life of yours unless you do.

And besides these present premonitions of God in the

soul, and these spiritual workings and prophecies of things amid which we live every day, there are other facts which one should take into his purpose of life, if he is to have a complete method of living. There is a whole order and range of divine facts in the world which we call Christianity. They are as positive facts of history as the Rocky Mountains are facts of geography. And one might as reasonably attempt to engineer a railroad across a continent to the Golden Gate without taking into account the Rocky Mountains, as seek to stretch a purpose across this life without taking into his plan the whole range of exalted facts which we call Christianity.

I suppose if a man had begun in Mexico and travelled northwards for hundreds of miles following the mountain chain, he could not then easily be convinced by any philosopher reasoning in his study, that the high passes through which his path had wound, and the mighty peaks up to which he had gazed, were only stories of the travellers, or battlements of clouds mistaken for realities. And I suppose if any one of us had been born in that same year when Jesus was born on earth, and had lived on and on from age to age, and had followed for centuries along its winding way the progress of the Gospel; had seen one after another the characters it has elevated into heavenly light, and observed the one constant law of formation which runs on from the beginning throughout this new epoch of the world's history;—such a traveller down through Christian history could not easily be persuaded by any fine reasoning that Christianity in its continuous order and all its

massive facts is a myth—a vision of Paul—a dream of John—a cloud-land of mistaken faith! Christianity in its great ranges of truth and its continuous exaltation of humanity, is *the* fact with which the modern world and our life have to deal. Christianity is a divine architecture of history which cannot be explained merely as a work of men's hands.

From all these mighty facts let me now specify but these two. The Person of Christ is the central fact. Pilate did not know what to do with it—that fact of the Lord before him—and he turned coward under the eye of the King of men, and would wash his hands of his blood. The world cannot evade its responsibility before the divine fact of Jesus' personality. He looks calmly down upon all the generations, and each must crucify him afresh, or confess him. He stands before the judgment-throne of every soul to whom his Gospel is preached, and the final question of our lives—whether we will or no—becomes this sole and single question;—What shall I do with this Jesus which is called Christ?

The other fact, of which I speak, is the power of the Holy Ghost in the lives of men. The Spirit of God has always been with the world, but since Christ finished his work the Holy Spirit has been with men, and in the lives of men, as never before so intimately, so powerfully, and in such helpfulness and grace. "Oh! now," some one says, "you are in the air again with your sermon, and not standing on the firm ground of facts." Possibly we are in the air, with such faith, above the levels of the street at least, and the din of the world. But we have not lost firm footing upon the facts of

experience when we say, We believe in the Holy Ghost. We are simply standing upon a high yet firm range of facts which run straight through Christian history, when we rest upon the truth of the Holy Ghost. There are experiences of men and women called to be saints which are radiant with light from above. There is in our lives a power which is greater than we. I envy not the heart nor the intellect of that man who has never had more in his own life and in his own thought than he can explain by saying, "That is my own work; that is my own creation; I devised for myself that aspiration; I made that instinctive prayer; I manufactured that great idea; I painted upon my own soul that vision of better things; I have received only what I have given myself; I have never seen or followed one ray of light that fell upon my path from above." Christian experience is full of the witness of Spirit to spirit—the witness which the apostles recognized of the Spirit of God to our spirits that we are the sons of God. The Catholic Church universal, from the ancient times until now, confesses: "We believe in the Holy Ghost;"—and if in this faith we have been confessing to an unreality and a shadow, then equally the confession of the Church to duty, to purity, to moral heroism, to righteousness, to its charities and its homes, is a delusion and a dream; for all these triumphs of godliness in the world are the signs and the evidences, the issues and results, of this its first and supreme confession: We believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, and in the Holy Ghost.

We must allow that a provisional way of living is justifiable only upon the supposition that it is necessary,

or that we can do no better. One may live as well as he can in a tent, provided there is no material at hand of which he may build a house. One may camp out under a merely moral theory of life, provided a religious home be an impossibility. But there are materials sound and ample for a Christian home for life. There are divine facts enough all about us in this world to whose shelter we can go, and within which we may live better, happier lives. The Church of Christ is a home of souls. There are far too many men and women camping out under insufficient ideas of life just outside our churches—and all the while the door is open,—all things are now ready, and yet there is room !

I want to leave in your thought one or two of the many considerations which combine to show the completeness of the Christian method of living, and the comparative incompleteness of even the best method of life which is not clearly and consciously Christian.

The Christian method is life from above. Christ finds the child that was lost, and sets him in the midst of the divine Fatherhood. Christ's Spirit received in the world is the power of the divine love beating at the heart of all earthly want and sorrow and sin. The Christian life, the life formed after this Christian method, is the open, large, out-of-door life of the soul ; the life not shut in to itself, but looking out upon all realities, and open to the whole day of God. "Not of ourselves ;"—so the first Christians said, and so we confess ;—"not of ourselves ; it is the gift of God."

And, finally, to leave all else unsaid, this Christlike method of life shows its completeness, I might say its

perfect naturalness, in this respect that it does tend more and more to harmonize everything in us and around us ; and the growing harmony of life is the sure proof that the method cannot be wrong. Let any man try to live in the principle and power of Jesus Christ, and he will find what?—struggles often with temptation? strife sometimes hard with himself and the world? Yes, surely, if he would live as an honest Christian man. But he will know that he does not toil as a slave in this world which holds its creatures as the Roman galleys did the captive slaves upon the benches ; he knows that in all the struggle of his life he is the Lord's freeman, and when his course shall be over he looks for the crown of life which the Lord shall give. He will find, too, a peace such as the world cannot give at the centre of all life's storm, a peace like the rest of heaven around all this world's ambitions and cares. Not growing discord, which betrays a method that is wrong, but growing peace, which shows that the method of life is right, is the world's experience of Christianity.

If we then would live aright, we must seek to be in right relations or harmony with all truths, all facts, and all realities in this world or the world to come. Life is imperfect unless it be thus a perfect reconciliation. Life, however noble, useful, or beautiful, is manifestly incomplete, unless it seeks for and finds at last perfect reconciliation with earth and heaven, and all things which are therein. We must be at one with ourselves ; at one with nature and all its laws ; at one with all spirits of good ; at one with all celestial dominions and powers ; in a single word which includes all, we must be at one

with God, before we can begin to be complete, before ever we can gain the royal, true, eternal life.

This is the life which Jesus Christ brings within the reach of the child's prayer. And every man must receive it as a little child from God. And now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.

XIV.

THE MISSIONARY MOTIVE.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us."—2 COR. v. 14.

THUS the great missionary apostle takes us into the secret of his enthusiasm in spreading the glad tidings abroad among the Gentiles. The love of Christ beats always at the heart of true missionary life.

The epistle in which this missionary motive is announced bears the stamp of St. Paul's manhood. He was at that time throwing himself into the great warfare of his life. He was in the thick of the storm of his grand battle for the law of liberty in the grace of Christ. The churches were filled with misrepresentations of his work; he saw suspicion in the eyes of those whom he would lead to greater Christian victories; and while he was uplifting the sign of the Cross in triumph among the Gentiles, some reactionary spirits, stirred up by men with letters from the brethren in Jerusalem, were denying his right to preach as an apostle even among churches in which he had been called of the Lord to minister.

In this chapter Paul rises above all this clamor and gainsaying, beyond the din of party disputings, up to the pure source and inspiration of his missionary enthusiasm;—"For the love of Christ constraineth us." He who but yesterday was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, now judges that "one died for all, therefore all died;"—

the atonement is for the whole world, and the Gentiles should know what a blessing for all nations God has given in his Son;—"and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." Men everywhere are "no longer to live unto themselves;" we shall have a new world and a happier, when this Gospel of the new law of life shall be preached far and wide, and all nations shall be taught that henceforth men are "no longer to live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." This large, Christian grace is too great a boon from heaven for the disciples in Judea to be content to keep it to themselves; this blessing is too ample and universal in its design for them to be willing to see it confined within their own churches; they must speak everywhere the things which they have seen and know; it is plain as noon-day that God means his gift in Christ for the whole world. Let all men have it; behold, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation for the Gentiles! So to the chief apostle "everything is urgent;" and in journeyings often he makes haste from city to city, constrained by the love of Christ for all men, and feeling that a woe is upon him if he preaches not the Gospel. At Corinth, at Athens, at Rome, in all the centres of Pagan life, he sees, beneath the glitter and the gayety, the hollowness and wretchedness of a world whose strength is eaten out by its own lusts. The fearful picture still remains in the epistle to the Romans which the missionary apostle drew of the uncleanness and unnatural woes of the world dead in sin through

which he hastened to carry the life-giving Gospel of the Lord. This world in all its sinfulness and suffering he beholds, also, in the transfiguring light of the Christian's faith. For Christ has died for all; a new law of life, having in it the power of a new creation, has been made known in Christ: "Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh." The missionary apostle can look upon the most sunken Corinthian to whom he preaches Christ in the glorifying hope of the spiritual renewal of human nature through the Gospel; he need know the most abandoned man no longer after his fallen nature and grossness only, but after a higher possibility of the Spirit. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know *him so* no more." All men, even the blessed Master himself, are to be known by his apostles henceforth after the Spirit. The man Jesus has vanished from earth; but the presence of the Spirit of Christ is for all places and for all men. There are points in the midst of the thick pagan darkness beginning to shine with this light from heaven; the whole world, to which the Gospel is to be preached, shall in time be renewed by its power. "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The Christian is a new man in a new world. He is a changed man changing the world around him. In the light and hope of his faith all things are become new.

Still the missionary of the cross lifts up his eyes to behold this vision of apostolic faith;—old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new, to the glad faith of the Christian hero who is constrained in

the midst of heathen darkness and want to preach the Gospel of renewing grace by the love of Christ. Inspiration enough for him in his devoted work is faith's happy vision of the new creation ! He needs not to be pressed to his self-denials by fear lest God's Christian providence towards his lost children shall finally fail of all gracious opportunity unless he can preach Christ instantly to millions who are dying without knowledge of the Gospel ; he is constrained by the love of Christ to find his life in doing daily the Master's work among the poor, the ignorant, and the forsaken, for whom Christ lived and died.

There was a theological opinion prevalent among the first Christians which might have cooled, we should think, their missionary ardor. From some things Paul had said, quite incidentally perhaps, to the Thessalonians, many were led to entertain the thought that the Lord might come in their own generation. It is not improbable that Paul at first may have shared this not unnatural expectation. Although he may have thought this opinion concerning the Lord's speedy coming a not improbable opinion, he does not seem, however, at any time to have taught it as a dogma of his faith. It was not regarded as a thing incredible among some of his converts that at the break of any morning there might be heard across the valleys and over the sea the sound of the last trumpet ; or in the peace of any evening the form of the Son of man might be seen coming upon the clouds of heaven in his glory. This expectation seems to have misled some believers into idle waiting and useless lives. And if the Lord might be expected to come

at any moment, what need was there, or reason, for far-reaching missionary endeavors and continued self-denials? Surely the mass of paganism could not be leavened in a generation by their hands! But although the missionary Apostle himself might think often and entertain his own watchful opinions concerning the probable times and seasons of the Lord's coming, it is certain that no views which at any time he may have held upon that doubtful matter, and no logical inferences which might be drawn by others from such opinions and speculations, ever for one moment disturbed his knowledge of the commission to preach the Gospel in all the world which the disciples had received directly from the ascending Lord. The love of Christ constrained him to preach the Gospel from Jerusalem even unto Illyricum. If, as many thought not impossible, the Lord should come to-day or to-morrow, he should find his faithful servant doing his work and seeking for the lost.

Thus from the beginning the missionary motive has risen above perplexing questions and doubtful disputations in theology. It has not been lowered or dimmed by changes which in the past fifty years have come over our prevalent theology. It is now, for example, a general opinion in evangelical circles that God will apply the work of Christ for the salvation of any heathen who may have lived up to the light of nature. The modified Calvinism of New England recoils from the extreme belief that only the small fraction of the human race to whom Christ has actually been preached can possibly be saved. The Christian theologian hopes to greet Socrates among the humble-minded searchers after truth upon

those final heights of heavenly wisdom. There is, indeed, no explicit warrant for this belief in the Scriptures. Peter's exclamation of surprise, when Cornelius had sent to him to learn of Christ, has no immediate reference to our question what shall become of the heathen whom no providence leads to learn of Christ from any apostle, at least in this world. Like that other general opinion among modern believers that those who die in early infancy shall be graciously saved, this belief that in some gracious way God may accept many unconverted heathen, is an extra-Scriptural belief. It is not un-Scriptural; but it is extra-Biblical. Jesus never said one explicit word upon these subjects about which we ask many questions. Nevertheless, Christians generally have come to cherish such gracious hopes because they seem to spring up spontaneously in the heart of faith from our Christian conception of the character of God. As teachings of the Spirit of Christ in the Christian consciousness of the Church they commend themselves to believers, and are not found contrary to the Scriptures. But do these commonly-received views of God's larger, though "uncovenanted" mercies, stand in the way of the missionary activity of the churches among which they prevail? It might easily be shown that logically they must restrain missionary effort. And it has not been among us an altogether unheard of thing for men to justify their apathy in this cause by the reflection that it might be a mistaken kindness for us to bring the heathen to the knowledge and judgment of the Gospel. Why should we take infinite pains to preach the doctrines of grace to

people who can be saved by the light of nature and conscience?

The fact, however, that any belief may be apparently either stimulating, or repressive, is very secondary and minor evidence when we are seeking earnestly for the whole truth. Thus it might greatly stimulate Sunday-school work if it could be proclaimed that all persons who shall not be converted before they are twelve years old shall have no further opportunity of grace. Possibly it might give the evangelist great success if he could stand in a pulpit and say, "All who do not come to Jesus before the clock shall finish striking twelve, shall have no further day of grace." Possibly it might inspire the Church with great missionary zeal if it were revealed to us that all to whom we cannot carry the Gospel have no other means of salvation. But also so tremendous a responsibility might prove too strong a stimulus for faith to endure; so terrible a fear might not merely "cut the nerve of missions," but paralyze the heart of Christian love. An impossible task might crush the spirit of our missionaries; and the heavenly Father in the word of his grace has never laid upon the messengers of the glad tidings a burden which human hearts could not bear.

It would be, on our part, a foolish fear, and a grievous suspicion, to imagine that a growing charity of faith towards God by which most Calvinistic divines have been restrained from judging that all heathen without knowledge of Christ must necessarily be lost, has rendered them indifferent to the missionary spirit of Christianity, or has tended to diminish their contributions for that most Christlike work to which any heart capable

of responding to the love of Christ is gladly constrained. Their extra-Scriptural, but not un-Christian opinion concerning unrevealed possibilities of grace for the heathen would certainly be a right thing in the wrong place if it should be found for a moment in the way of their missionary work. These alleviations of the theology of New England, which honorable men still with us have happily wrought for us, have not apparently cooled the ardor or enervated the energy of our churches in their work for missions. Those who have succeeded in modifying Calvinism in the direction of a larger faith in a universal atonement have not failed in greater works of charity on account of their broader conceptions of the love of God in Christ. Those who would modify Calvinism still further in the direction of a larger faith in the universal dispensation of the Holy Spirit are not likely to lose their love for souls in their clearer trust that God has in his design one universal system of Christian grace for the whole world. Their missionary motive rises rather than falls with their growing faith that our work is a part of the whole dispensation of grace, and where we cannot go in his name, beyond all possible effort of ours, Christ may still have ways unrevealed to us of sending his Spirit to all souls, of whatever age or land, before their final decision of character and judgment. And the Christian Church, believing in God's love in Christ for the world, and receiving its commission of the Gospel from the Lord who died for all, while hospitable to any suggestion which the fathers may have made, or which may still be drawn from better methods of studying God's Word and learning the mind of Christ concern-

ing any of the dark problems of its theology, will hold ever sacred its missionary heritage; and under the constraining love of Christ it is pressing forward to greater works of faith, and shall rejoice in triumphs more marvellous of redeeming grace.

The zeal of the chief apostle in his missionary preaching was kept up to white heat not only by his inward fervor of spirit, but also by the pressure upon him of the great opportunity for the Gospel wherever he went. He could hope in his life-time to seize upon the chief cities, the commanding commercial centres, for Christ. The straight ways of the Roman empire ran in every direction before the ambassadors of reconciliation. The constraining love and the great opportunity worked together in causing his soul to burn with zeal. What, then, would have been his appeal to the churches, if he could have stood upon the platform of the American Board at any of its recent meetings, and spoken to us in the midst of our world-wide opportunity? God is giving us in our day a grander opportunity for the Gospel than the first missionary apostle ever dreamed of seeing. A world greater than the Roman empire lies in every direction open to our approach. Powers of the earth and the air unknown to the ancients wait to speed the messages of Christian faith. The Church has now the opportunity of the centuries;—shall it not have the answering love?

I must here crowd large considerations into a small space. Think of the distance to which the hand of Christian love may now reach. St. Paul with his letters and journeyings often could reach at furthest only a few hundred miles around him; but now Christian benevo-

lence holds the whole world in its hand. The Christian merchant can go to his counting-room and send forth a check that may wing a benevolent thought of his heart around the world. It may light in a college in Turkey, from which men have been sent forth with a Christian education to positions of responsibility and power; it may hover over a school for girls in the East, where woman is waiting for the deliverance of the Gospel of the Son of Mary; it may enter as a ray of light the dark continent; it may help swell the stream of Christian influence for the regeneration of India; it may travel on its mission of mercy along the crowded ways of the Celestial Empire; it may meet with Christ's hope for the future the awakening mind of Japan; it may fly across the ocean and reach the shores of the isles of the sea; it may follow the lines of new railways—a messenger of peace—through the stormy heart of Mexico; it may visit prisons and hospitals, carry bread to the starving and succour to the suffering, and return from its world-wide flight to his own door, a prayer and a blessing for him and for all Christians who, gladly constrained by the love of Christ, have sent forth under the whole heavens the angels of their charity to bring laws and liberty, to leave righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost among all peoples and nations for whom Christ died and rose again.

Think, too, how little it costs to transform your gifts through the devotion of others into actual work done among the heathen. It is said that it costs this government some fifteen cents to deposit every dollar of its appropriations among the Indians; it costs you—how much?—for every dollar which you can take from your

business? But, besides three cents on a dollar spent in scattering missionary information, it will cost you just three cents through the American Board to deposit in Christian work at the other end of the world any dollar which the love of the Master may constrain you to drop into our contribution-box for foreign missions. And how wonderfully the Lord multiplies the rich man's gifts by the hands of his self-denying servants who in the heroism of modern Christianity are spreading the glad tidings in every land! Besides the world-wide reach even of the feeblest hand of Christian benevolence through our great missionary societies, and the indefinite multiplication, through the self-denials of devoted workers, of the rich man's gifts, let me remind you further of the promise now resting upon missionary fields. Hardly seventy-five years ago three students at Andover asked the Association of Congregational ministers whether they considered their thoughts on foreign missions visionary and impracticable. Now, as the results of the foreign missionary societies of the United States alone, nearly five thousand mission stations and sub-stations, about six thousand laborers, over two hundred thousand enrolled communicants, and some fourteen hundred schools are the answer substantial and glorious upon the white missionary field of the world to the visionary thought of Christian love in the early years of the present century. Now that the beginnings have been made, now that the years of patient waiting without a convert have been lived through in more than one station, now that the doors of over two hundred and fifty languages and dialects have been opened for the entrance of God's word, now that the

vision of the beginning of the century has become the sacred trust of the Church, what wonders of redeeming love may we not expect to see before this missionary century shall close? Lift up your eyes, and behold! The bow of a divine promise rests upon the ends of the earth; and everywhere Christian laborers may go forth, they walk under the bright arch which spans the whole world with the promise of redemption!

Think also of the new demands made upon Christian love by these enlarging opportunities of missionary conquest. The Lord admits us into the high responsibilities of the missionary century. Doubtless He might do this work without us. God might send legions of his angels to minister to the Christ in his work of redeeming all nations; celestial choirs might sing the glad tidings on other hills than those of Bethlehem; but God chooses to lay restraint upon the promptings of his own benevolence so far as to wait for our offerings of our lives, and to take us into the gracious responsibilities of his kingdom. He would train men for eternal life in his lowly service in this world. In some larger purpose of good for all men than we may fully know He waits for his people to scatter over the whole world the seeds which His Spirit shall make fruitful. To our hands, for the largest, final good, He commits, in the patience of his love, the work of reclaiming the fields laid waste by man's sin. And now the urgent opportunities, the evident and increasing success of the Gospel in lands which but yesterday were shut up in their own darkness, do tax the nerve of our Christianity. Have we courage and perseverance enough for the great battle? Have we reserve strength enough

at home for the victories which the heroes upon the advance line, the sentinels at the front, send us back word from post after post of missionary vigilance are within our reach, by the grace of God, with united effort on our part, easy to be won? Are we ready to follow the Lord's command? to bring up our reserves of money and of men? to sound a forward movement along the whole line? Or must we recall our brave soldiers from the front, from their prospect of glorious advances for Christ's hosts, in order that they may help us put down the attack of scepticism, denials, worldliness, back-bitings, theological enmities and disputings in our rear? My brethren, the danger to Christian missions in this day of the Son of man will not come through the breaking down of denominational fences, or the removal of any ecclesiastical fortifications between Christians; nor will it come through liberty of thought, or from our willingness to open the gates on every side to Christian scholarship;—the danger threatens from an altogether different direction; the danger to Christian missions comes from worldliness within the Church, from small ambitions and petty purposes among defenders of the faith, from our blindness to the Scriptures of God's daily providence which the Spirit of Christ is now writing large in the thought and upon the wants of the world. Before the great responsibilities of this grand missionary age the Lord Christ requires of us a return to simpler, sincerer Biblical faiths, and a new baptism of our own hearts in the Spirit of Christ,—and then a pressing forward with one mind and with all our might to the conquest of the world by the Cross of Christ!

I will not dwell at length upon the indirect and incidental benefits of foreign missions. They have not been thus far a bad business investment for this country, if we take no higher view of them, by their indirect but powerful influence in opening new channels of trade and in bringing reclaimed peoples into the commerce of the civilized world. American agricultural implements, for example, have followed the landing of our missionaries upon barbarous shores, and American manufacturers have reaped rewards from the self-denials of our foreign missionaries. Were they only the pioneers of civilization and commerce, a country which can squander millions on "River and Harbor Improvements" might well afford to cover with its flag, too often held by the red hand of rapacity, that fearless band of missionaries who are bringing American justice and liberty to races of the down-trodden and the oppressed. A vigorous missionary policy is for us the best foreign policy. It is a policy of peaceable conquest of the world for Christ.

I will not, however, plead in a Christian pulpit as our warrant for patient continuance in this good work any of these lower, incidental, and commercial advantages of foreign missions. The venerable President Hopkins, in an address made at a recent meeting of the American Board in Portland, struck the key-note, above all controversy, which should echo and resound through all our churches, when he found in Christian love the inspiration and the power of this missionary age. To the music of this high motive all our benevolences are marching on. No other call will be needed by any heart capable of thrilling to the touch of Christ's Spirit, and

expanding with a Saviour's love for a lost world. God, in his wonder-working providence, is blotting out upon the map of the world the line of demarcation between home and foreign missions. We can hardly tell now where the one begins and the other ends. The world is one world now as it never has been before. Christian workers almost everywhere live now within telegraphic communication with one another. Work done now for foreign lands comes quickly home again along streams of immigration to our own shores. Seeds sown on far Western prairies shall ere long bring forth fruit whose seed in turn shall be wafted across oceans to bring forth more fruit in old civilizations. The distant is brought near, the whole world is at our door, and everywhere the Lord is coming ! He was not the Messiah of Judea only ; He was not the Lord of the Roman Empire only ; He was not the Creator of the nations of modern Europe merely ; lo ! the wilderness of the new world became a garden through his word ; He is not the Saviour of America only ; behold ! the isles of the sea wait for his coming, and the ends of the earth are given him for his inheritance !

Let the love of Christ—that supreme missionary motive—constrain us who stand in full view of the world-empire of the Cross to redoubled faith and zeal, to larger contributions worthy of Christianity, and to sympathies which know no bounds of place or sect, but are broad as the manifest destiny of the kingdom of Christ. In the consecration, prayers, and charity of all true believers let the Spirit of Christianity go forth along all the thoroughfares of commerce, and among the sinful and

suffering populations of the world, bringing a new law of life, and a brighter hope for the world to come,—even as the Master walked of old teaching the words of eternal life, and with a healing virtue in his garments for the slightest touch of want.

XV.

THE PERMANENT ELEMENTS OF FAITH.

“For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.”—2 COR. iii. 11.

OUR lives are full of fever and restlessness. In truth is quietness, and God only never changes. It seems as though God had left all the thoughts and works of man in fluctuation and variableness in order that we may not find anything abiding and always the same to us, except God himself. It is not simply that we ourselves are passing, and our works are but for a day; the lights which men follow as their guiding stars change before the eyes of the successive generations, and many things which once were held to be sacred and everlasting are the glory which passes from another age. We might bear better the changes which must come in our outward lives, if it were not for the changes which shake even those beliefs which have been life's foundations. Those sacred things which men would regard as most permanent are not always to the children as they were to the fathers; are not to us ourselves, as experience broadens and we know the thoughts of men, what they were in other days. Sometimes our hearts grow weary of all change, and we wish at least that in the firmament of man's faith the stars would stand still. But over all the heavens falls the shadow of turning, save upon God himself.

None of us have ever seen greater changes, shaking the foundations of things more sacred, than that Christian Apostle had seen who was born a Jew at Tarsus. The law given by Moses seemed to him permanent as the work of God. The sun might have been darkened, but the glory of Israel was forever. Yet a few short years only had gone, and he is thinking of that glory as something which is done away. That most sacred of religious forms is also of this earth earthy, and it must be changed. God only is unchangeable. It would have been most natural, had the Apostle stood looking back with regretful gaze upon the glory which was passing away. He might have wondered whether man's mind and heart can ever find anything upon which to be at rest. Where, we ask, in view of changes hurrying by us, shall we stop? where shall we take our stand? There, we say, we will draw the line—but the next wave washes our line away. We say, Here we will take our stand;—but the tide stops not at our feet. The Hebrew Christian Apostle who had seen a whole venerable religion take in his lifetime its place among things mutable and passing, might well have grown weary of soul and wished that he was at rest with his fathers; but though in his day the religion of the fathers was changing, and the holy temple itself trembled on the verge of its destruction, he seems to have gained a faith which soared with a cheerful song above these passing things. He forgets to mourn over the glory which passeth away as his eye gladdens with the sight of a glory which excelleth. He assures us that all those things which men hoped might abide, and which were

glorious, however excellent, fail in this one respect that they are transient and perishable ; but there is a glory which excelleth—there are the more glorious things which shall remain.

Above and beyond all these passing forms of religion and of belief there are the things which remain. In all religion, in all faith, there are transient forms, and there are permanent elements.

In saying this, I have said not much to help any one who may be tossed up and down in his own thoughts, not knowing what to think or believe. Yet I have said something ; and this, though little, is important. It is something to trust that there are permanent realities of things even though we may not yet be sure what they are. It is something to believe in our hearts that there are abiding elements of truth and faith even though all things may seem flitting like shadows before our eyes.

It is utter loss of heart, it is coldness of mind like death, not to believe in eternal truth—to hold no more the first living faith of nature that there are things true and real and everlasting. If any man is in danger of this utter loss of faith, I know of but one remedy for him, and that is for him to go at once and do some truth, until in doing it he believes in it. We, however, believe that there are, that there must be, some permanent elements of faith, some things above all changes of the thoughts of men, which are real and abiding. The practical question for us is, how shall we distinguish that which is passing from that which remains and is more glorious ?

I wish to indicate, briefly, several successive steps by

which it seems to me a candid mind may come to some certainty in the substance of things to be believed and loved. We reach assurance in faith only as we find for ourselves, first, the way up to Jesus Christ as the supreme authority of faith ; and then, secondly, find for ourselves the way down from Jesus Christ to the present hour, and the questions of our own times. Accordingly, let me enumerate several way-marks in this path up to Jesus Christ, and then down from Jesus Christ to any question upon our minds or hearts.

First, we may approach the Divine Man through the constitutional wants and capacities of our own souls. Our own souls are prophecies of something diviner than ourselves. We have capacities for more than now appears. The Christian fathers used to say that the human soul is organized for God. Our own hearts are such echoes of divinity that we should listen in expectation for the Voice from above to speak again. It would be nothing contrary to human nature, if at any time God should manifest himself in the flesh. Given on this earth such a being as the first man, Adam, and it is in order then to expect the coming of the second Man, which is the Lord from heaven. The Christ, in other words, is the only perfect fulfillment of human nature ; and we do need him.

A second way-mark in the ascent to the Christ, is afforded by the fact that the world seems, in many respects, to have been made for a Christ to come. The apparent direction of the creation from the beginning has been ever to something higher and diviner. There has been a constant ascent of things towards the Spirit

and God. The course of nature has been one uniform prophecy of something better and more spiritual. At first, so far as we know, there was matter and motion ; then worlds and life ; then instinct, and life rising to self-consciousness ; then reasoning, and thoughts of the spirit searching beyond the stars ;—and what wonder would it be, if, looking up and along this great ascent of nature man-wards and God-wards, we should see, standing at the end of it all, One in the form of man, yet having the glory of the Father's Person—One in whom nature itself, which came from God, returns at last to God—One in whom all things are made complete—One who finishes the whole creation, as, in his own person, he binds it to the throne of God. Without some Christ the creation would be unfinished,—a broken shaft without its capital—an image of divinity without its head and crown.

Starting thus from our own souls, and taught what we may look for and dream of, at least, by the tendencies of nature, we strike next into the way of history, and in ancient times we come upon increasing signs of a leading and gathering of events according to some higher law. I mean to say that if, for instance, a man will take the books of Moses, and compare them with the records of the contemporaneous traditions and beliefs of the world, he will see signs in them of the working of some higher, spiritual power according to some supernatural law. There is evidence that the Bible begins to take form and shape, and to grow, according to some higher law, and for some perfect fruit to come ; as there is evidence that a plant which springs up from the ground feels the impul-

sion of something above the ordinary forces of the soil and the natural gravitation of the earth in which it strikes its roots. Follow up the growth of the Bible until you come to the age of its great prophecies. Examine it there ; make a section of it at that time ; and you will find it more difficult still to explain it all as a merely human product. The evidence increases that in the midst of human history a higher power is working, and events are being formed and shaped for some diviner end. You can begin to understand somewhat, when you reach the age of Isaiah, the true law of all this growth of the religion of Israel. It is a growth after a Messianic law. It is for a Christ to come. That is the law of the type of the whole dispensation. This farther purpose, this Spirit of the coming Messiah, forming and moulding the history of the Bible of Israel, distinguishes the Old Testament from everything else in antiquity around it. The working of God's Spirit gives unity to the whole Bible ; and this law of the Spirit of Christ pervading it separates it from all other books, as the law of life in the tree in your orchard has lifted it up from the earth, contrary to gravitation, and distinguishes it from the ground which its boughs overshadow.

Following thus the prophecy of the Spirit down through the old dispensation, we come to the Gospels, and the presence unmistakable of Jesus himself. Nature and history have led on, and pointed up towards him that should come ; and when he stands among men, declaring that in him the law and the prophets are fulfilled, he is his own witness. He stands in the

centre where all lights converge, and all the generations are before him ; and the ages, looking up to him, say, "We cannot declare his coming ; he is not of us. Never man spake as this man. Never man lived as this man. Never man died as this man !" Having this record of the Son of God on earth, it is easy to add the confession : never man was born as this man ; never man rose from the dead, and ascended, as this man. This is only to believe in the thorough self-consistency of Jesus Christ. This is only to make one music of the whole. It is easier to believe wholly in the Son of God, than to believe in him in part. We believe, then, that his birth, and life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension are in accordance with law—one law of divinity throughout. The heavenly beginning and the heavenly end are in accordance with that heavenly middle-part of the life of Jesus which men saw and knew, and which was not like man.

I have indicated thus, in outline, at least, a way in which it seems to me, as a reasonable man, I can come up to Christ, and own him to be Master and Lord. His humanity is the proof of his divinity.

We have found the Messiah which is called the Christ ; but now the further question arises, how can we come down from the Christ to the present, so that we may know, for surety, amid the world's changes and confusions, that we have the mind of Christ ? Briefly and generally, the way down from Jesus through history to us is as follows : First, many men saw, and heard, and knew Jesus of Nazareth. They told others what they had seen and heard. Andrew "first findeth his own

brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah." And Philip findeth Nathanael. So the good news spread, and from the testimony of eye-witnesses the world began to learn of Jesus Christ. Then many began to write out their knowledge of Jesus. There was formed a tradition, partly treasured up in remembered words, partly written, of what Jesus had done and said. Down into the second century we find men referring to this common knowledge of their Lord. Even if this were all, we should not have been left in total ignorance of Jesus. But the same Power which prepared the world for Christ, and led prophecy up to Christ, secured a fitting representation of the Christ to after generations, and is still, in spiritual ways, showing the things of Christ to the world.

In coming up through nature and history to Christ we found in the Gospels the impression of Jesus' own Person and life upon the world. We now, in bringing Christ down to us, may use further the whole Apostolic literature as the interpretation of the mind of Christ.

For, secondly, under the law of the Spirit of Christ there were formed and gathered up for the whole after-world the testimonies and writings of Apostolic men. The written Scriptures were finished in the New Testament. These Apostolic men were chosen and trained to be the record-bearers of the Christ; and they were fitted both by their personal position with Jesus or near him, and by the special working in them of the general power of the Holy Ghost, to be to us authorities for Jesus, and the first interpreters of the mind of Christ. We believe, accordingly, that this written Scripture is

our supreme authority. But this is not all. There is one step more to be taken before we can bring Christ down to us.

Thirdly, we must receive something of His Spirit ourselves. We must read his words, and understand these authorities for Christ, in the spirit of Christ. We cannot vacate our own consciences and human hearts, and then hope to be filled from outside with the knowledge of the Lord. We must become ourselves in some measure Christ-like in our own thoughts, purposes, and feelings, in order really and fully to understand the Christ of the Scriptures. There has been working in this world from the beginning a divine Spirit. It was in the beginning moving over the first chaos of things ; it has worked through life and history up to the Christ ; and it has been working in the new world of redemption, showing to the spirits and hearts of men the things of Christ, and it has not suddenly stopped working in our day, and left us only with the letter which killeth. This is simply to say, in other words, that the Bible is indeed a gift of God, but it is a gift of God to the spiritual mind of the Church. It is a gift of God to the Christian sense of the Lord's friends. It is a gift of God to the common Christian sense of the Church. We live in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost.

I hope now we have found some light upon the question with which we began. How are we to distinguish for ourselves between that which is essentially and permanently Christian, and that which may be transient and passing in our beliefs and forms. Simply thus : we are to receive first from the Scriptures, so far as they go, the words of Jesus, and the teaching which by his

Spirit he meant to leave for us in the words of his chosen witnesses. Then we are to understand these words and teachings, to discover their substance and harmony, so far as we may, according to the best mind which God has given to good men, and, after the most Christlike ideas we can cherish as we seek to receive for ourselves the Spirit of Christ. Jesus Christ, the Christian Scriptures, and the Christlike heart,—these are the means given to men of knowing the everlasting truths, the abiding realities, the true God and eternal life. And this is precisely what the Apostle John said in the twentieth verse of the last chapter of his epistle: “And we know that the Son of God is come;”—that was the disciple’s positive knowledge of the historic Christ who had come: “The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;” that was the disciple’s spiritual discernment of Jesus and the mind of Jesus, the knowledge to which God’s Spirit opened the eyes of their understandings, a special gift of understanding Jesus imparted to the Apostles, yet in its nature not unlike the work of the Spirit in opening the minds of men often to fresh meanings in God’s words and works: “And we are in him that is true;” that is the full and final security of Christian faith and truth, for Christians to be in their own hearts, purposes, and desires, as much as they possibly can, in him that is true, “Even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Hold to the real, essential, everlasting Christian things; keep yourselves from worship of the forms which cannot last.

I want now to bring these remarks to their more direct bearings upon present things. Having indicated, though generally and without stopping to defend, or even to guard from misapprehension, some principles of Christian discrimination and confidence, I wish further to make trial of them in a few applications to present religious questions and conditions.

Not long ago a mere child said to me, "Perhaps I shall not believe when I am a man all the things which you believe." Surprised for a moment, I reflected: There is before me in that child another mystery of a living soul, called of God to work out its own life and its own faiths. Why should that child believe by and by all the things which I do now? If it be true to itself and its God, why should it not grow in its day beyond us in knowledge of divine truth? I revere the fathers; but some things which they held we have found belonged to the glory which was passing, not to the more excellent glory of that which remained. What ought we to wish for those children? To make their minds copies of our own? But the law of life is not a law of exact imitation. You can make a copy in clay. Life produces resemblances, but copies nothing. Not a dead faith would we give to our children. We would bring them to a living faith in those things which are essentially of God, and eternally Christlike. We would not seek anxiously to reproduce in them all our ideas and beliefs about religion, and about the Bible; but we would bring them gladly to Christ who is the Truth of God ever showing itself to the world through the Spirit. He has for them and for all generations, for each in its

own tongue, the words of eternal life. We would teach our children, above all things, those truths in the Scriptures, in the mind of the Church, and in our own thoughts, which reflect most clearly, quietly, and purely, the everlasting realities of God's kingdom and its righteousness. We would urge them in the early consecration of their own minds and hearts to seek with us, in the company of the disciples, for the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. We would see them beginning to walk their way of life with the Christ, who only can guide into all truth, hoping that, as they follow the leadings of his Spirit, they may live to behold in their day more of the glory which remaineth, and which excelleth, than we have seen, or shall see, this side our graves.

This, accordingly, is one application of my sermon to parents who are sometimes troubled by the new questions which their children are asking, and it may not be an untimely suggestion for present efforts in the Christian education of the young: let us seek in all ways—and the fresher the better—to help them receive for themselves the simple essentials of Christ's Gospel; let us, in guiding them, look up ourselves steadily to the clearest and abiding truths, those exalted and luminous Christian truths, the substance of things hoped for, by which the good in all ages have directed their steps; let us pray that those among us who are young may be brought, not indeed into all our thoughts and ways, but under the inspiration and the saving power of the grand, simple, beautiful laws of the Christian life.

I turn a moment to another application of this subject. In many directions the surface of religious life is now

rippled with the breezes of discussion ; and to some devout and sincere men the Congregational churches seem to be slipping into deflections from the faith which may end, they fear, in serious loss to evangelical religion. I need hardly say that we must recognize the fact that at this time, as in every age of growth and revival of religion in the history of the church, many things are changing, and there is a glory which passeth away ; nevertheless, this century, like all before it, belongs to the Lord and his Christ, and our only fear should be not to run ourselves before, nor to fall behind the Lord's leading of his people. One duty, however, always incumbent upon believers, seems to me especially urgent in any seasons of agitation, religious discussion, or transition. We should live and abide, as much as possible, with our own hearts in those truths which to us are most real and vital. Our private opinions may be needed in the world ; our own forms may be necessary now—I do not say that we should not maintain them ; but I do say that for our own quietness and inner truth of faith we need to look away from this present, and to cherish in our thoughts those elementary Christian truths which belong to the heart of the Christian faith in all the ages. And these are not passing away. They may be coming out in simpler beauty, in nearer approach to the conscience of the world, in larger revelations of their essential glory ; but they are not passing away. The belief in God is not passing away,—how can it?—from the soul of man who is God's child. But from all our questionings of nature, and wrestling of doubt with the unknown angel of the Lord, we are learning, perhaps

never before so deeply, what those old Hebrew words mean,—The living God ! A candidate for the Gospel ministry rejects, as though there were no fresh manna for his faith in them, words of belief in the divine government and its inexorable necessities, upon the strength of which others in former days have done their work, and men look askance and think a glory has passed from the faith of one of the oldest of the New England churches ; but they should have noticed, striving for expression, the fresh faith in a living God who is personally and immediately concerned with all things, and most of all with the living souls of men ; who has not withdrawn himself behind a constitution of things, and whose government is not that of a divine statecraft ; the living God who is personally conducting this universe, balancing every star, and clothing every lily of the valley, the Father of all spirits. And do we not need more of this kind of faith in God ?

Again, men are disusing expressions of belief once common concerning the atoning work of Christ ; and some, sincerely troubled, say : So passes the glory of the Cross. Not so, my brethren. The glory of the Cross can never pass from earth, because it is the eternal glory of the love of God. Listen again, and humbly ; and still upon our lips, although in simpler words of human love and need, you will hear the song of the ages : “ Worthy the Lamb that was slain.” God’s Spirit is bringing closer home to our hearts the divine human need there was for such sufferings as Christ’s in the forgiveness of the sin of the world. Again, there seems of late years to have fallen over our pulpits a great

silence upon the subject of the judgment-day. And some say, Shall Jesus' word of eternal life and eternal punishment pass away from our pulpits? No, not so. Perhaps God has seen fit to make a little silence in our pulpits that our confused echoes of Jesus' Gospel might die away, and men listen again with hushed hearts to his eternal words. It was time that the echo of great Cæsar's voice in our Latin theology should cease, that we might listen again for the still small voice of conscience, and the calm, eternal word of the Lamb upon the throne. We had to cease repeating the father's sermons upon sinners in the hand of an angry God, at which once indeed the souls of men trembled, but by which now they are not moved, in order that we might begin to preach again according to the warnings of our own hearts the fearful wickedness and doom of a soul flying with wilful selfishness into the face of the glory of the loving, Christian God. Now that scholastic conceptions of human depravity, lacking moral reality, are breaking up, and too mechanical conceptions of retribution, failing in vital power in the life of the world, are passing away, the truth from of old remains looking down as from Heaven upon us, and commanding us. God is holy, and our hearts condemn us. And now the silence which had fallen on our pulpits begins to be broken by more than one trembling voice declaring the awful possibilities of loss, degradation, and death involved in the natural destiny of a soul which cuts itself off from its own proper environment of truth, love, and God. The old truth, the permanent truth, the substance of the truth, which needs to be preached to

every generation of selfish worldlings with prophetic power, is not to pass away—the truth of the eternal laws of retribution, of the deadly consequences of sin, of the peril of trifling now with a gift of God so precious as the life of a soul. The words of Jesus do not pass away, although we are learning to confess that we do not find in his Scriptures an unreserved revelation either of the strange beginnings, or the possible endings of sin, and Christ has many things to say to us which we cannot bear now ; while, in the silence of our own confused echoes of the Lord's words, we may hear a fuller, sweeter revelation than before of the glory which remaineth, the glory which excelleth, even the eternal love of God in Christ.

Neither are the motives to repentance and a godly life passing from us. The deeper down into God's thoughts in this world we can go, and the more we may learn of the Lord's ways and his will for souls, the more reason have we to trust, and to live wholly in the simple, childlike confidence of the Christian heart. And the more we learn of our own evil nature, and our own weakness and need of being put right, and kept right, the more reason have we for the humble prayer of the heart for the forgiveness of sins, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God in his own gracious Christianity is now ever round about us ; our true life is in that divine air and element of being. The one thing needful for us is for our souls to breathe and live again in this all-vitalizing presence and grace of God. We must come into entire, happy harmony with eternal things, or perish.

XVI.

TIME A RATE OF MOTION.

“ But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”
—2 PETER iii. 8.

I HAVE chosen this text for a sermon upon the closing Sabbath of another year, because it is an attempt of an inspired Apostle to lift his brethren out of the common wordly view of time up into something like God's view of the years of man's life. The Apostle evidently wishes us to look down upon the flight of the years more as God in his eternity looks down upon them. We are to approach the idea of eternity not by multiplying years together in indefinite figures of time, but more simply and truly by remembering that with the Eternal our measurements of time have no importance; one of our days with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand of our years are as one day.

The philosophers have invented many ingenuities of speech in the attempt to bring the intuitions of space and time within the compass of human understanding. The scholastics used to say of space that it is a circle whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere. And the medieval theologians labored to impress upon men the duration of the eternal ages by

representing a bird as pecking against a mountain, and removing in its bill every time it rose a grain of sand ; and by the thought of the length of time it would take for the little bird to remove, grain by grain, the mountain, they sought to find a mental unit of measurement for the ages of eternity. Others have imagined a strong tower standing in the midst of a flowing stream ; and they have said, the ripples at its base represent the present moments ; the stream below the tower represents the time which is past and gone ; and the waters flowing down from above represent the future hurrying towards the present ; while the tower itself, standing unmoved in the running stream, is the symbol of that which never changes, the eternity of God.

But the inspired text is simpler and truer than these imaginations of the philosophers. With the Eternal a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. God inhabiteth eternity. As he is omnipresent, and space has no distances to his free Spirit ; so he dwells in eternity, and a thousand years to him are as one day.

Upon this last Sabbath of the year I wish to suggest some thoughts with regard to the time given us on earth, seeking, as I shall speak, to look upon the passing years, as the Apostle in our text evidently wished to have Christians do. I ask you therefore to reflect, first, that time is a gift of God to the creation. Time is a bequest from the Eternal conveyed and secured in the constitution of the creation. These visible, revolving worlds are by nature temporal. Time is the rate of motion determined by the Creator in his own thought of the worlds. There

is no such thing as time except as there are created worlds to mark time. We cannot conceive of time apart from the finite creation. Time is simply the rate at which the things which are made go on. There would be no time without a creation to keep time. God has set up the worlds to make and to mark time. He dwells not in these times of his creation, but he inhabiteth eternity. To him a thousand years are as one day.

Now, inasmuch as time itself is an original gift of God to the creation, we may well stop to reflect upon the value of this natal gift from the everlasting Father of perfect time to the creation. It is one of the primal evidences of the benevolence of the Creator. This original providence of perfect time for the world, true to the infinitesimal of a second through the ages of ages, is evidence of the far-seeing thoughtfulness of the Creator. It is the first condition and means of conveyance of all other good gifts of God. Reflect a moment how everything in man's life, and in God's own plan of man's education and redemption, would have been thrown into confusion and spoiled, had not the earth in the beginning been made a good time-keeper among the stars. Some fixed and inviolable order of succession, some law of perfect time is absolutely necessary to all man's work under the sun. If the order of time were changed arbitrarily for the universe every now and then, history would be chaos. Time is the *magna charta* of all man's rights upon the earth. You recall how prominently in the first chapter of the book of Genesis the fact is brought out that the lights in the firmament of the heaven were made for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and

years. A superficial criticism says : This earth is an insignificant point of matter in space, and are we to believe, as Moses tells us, that the suns and stars were made with reference to man, simply to mark time for him ? But Moses was a wiser interpreter of God's thought in the creation than many who now know more than Moses could have known of the record of the rocks ; for he taught this truth, that time is God's first gift to the earth—the mornings and evenings of the days in which all things are made good in their seasons. Hence the most lordly star in space is doing no menial task, but fulfilling a kingly decree, as it marks upon the skies the times and seasons which God hath appointed. The ancient order of the heavens is the surety that our God is not a Sovereign who has made us of his mere pleasure, but one who has made all things according to his good pleasure ; and whether man's works upon the earth be good or evil, this solar system which God made shall keep true time without variableness, or shadow of turning, until the end comes, and time shall be no longer.

Keeping in mind this fact that time is a gift of God to the creation, reflect, secondly, that what we know as time is only the particular rate of motion to which our life on this earth has been adjusted. My point is, in other words, that our time on earth is nothing necessary to God, or absolute, but only a relative thing, a present condition, or rate, of our existence, appointed to us by the Creator. This idea of time as a relative thing you can perhaps catch more readily in some illustrations of it. For example, you can easily imagine that the human

race might have been put to school upon a planet of swifter revolutions than our earth, and all our vital powers adapted to the more rapid succession of day and night upon that orb—our pulses made to beat proportionally quicker, and the whole mechanism of life and thought made to run more swiftly,—so that the same human history might be lived through upon that faster world—just so many days and years as shall fill up man's life on earth—yet at a quicker pace, and in less time, as we measure it by our earth's diameter ; while, nevertheless, it would seem just as long upon that supposed faster world, because the motions and pulses of life and thought had been proportionally quickened. Increase the rapidity of the nerve-currents, and the quickness of thought, at the same rate that you suppose the length of a day to be decreased, and a shorter time would seem as the longer day. The sense of the duration of time, that is, is a mere matter of proportion between the rate of the physiological processes of our life, and the rate at which the world spins round. So, on the other hand, God might have graduated our rate of living and thinking to the motions of a slower planet than this earth, and still our consciousness of the duration of the years, our sense of time, have remained precisely the same. Time, then, is only a relative thing, the rate of motion of the mechanism ; nothing of absolute determination, or worth in itself. God has chosen this earth for our time-keeper, and adjusted our consciousness of life to its rate of motion ; God has determined the existing time-rate of human history for us, out of many possibilities of different time-

rates, for reasons which he thought best, and which we do not know.

Let me suggest one or two other illustrations of the point that time is a relative thing, of no absolute determination or worth ; for I have a practical purpose, to appear by and by, in breaking up our common idea that time is to run on necessarily, as we now measure it, forever and forever. Let me suppose, further, that an insect flitting its brief day in the sunshine is sufficiently intelligent to be conscious of its existence, and the succession of events in its life. Its mechanism of life is adapted to the duration of a summer's day. But at its quick rate of living that day might be as long as a year to us. The passing of a summer cloud might be as a dark age to an insect tribe. The wing of a gnat, it has been calculated, beats eight thousand times a second. We cannot begin to think so quickly as that. Sensation travels slowly from our finger-tips to our brains in comparison with that. But if thought could fly as quickly as the quivering of that wing, a second to a being capable of such thought would expand into minutes' length ; the hours would grow into days, and the days into centuries. We can readily conceive of a thoughtful being organized with such microscopical fineness, and all its powers of experience adjusted to successions of time so infinitesimal, that to its consciousness of being a day of our life might seem as a thousand years. Time, I say again then, is thus seen to be of no absolute worth in itself, but it has value only in relation to the uses and purposes of the created being for whom the stars keep time.

I may make this idea of the relative nature of time

still plainer by reminding you how often in our own experiences we escape from the ordinary course of the world's time, and in a sense make our own time for ourselves, as we live in memory or in anticipation. For instance, seven years are a considerable time as marked by the signs of the Zodiac; but we are told that they seemed but a few days unto Jacob for the love he had to Rachel. One hour of terrible mental anxiety may seem long as half a life-time, and in a single night hair has been known to turn white as with age. There have been hours in which we have lived months. Fear and hope, sorrow and joy, thought and action, when intense, have a certain witchery and mastery over our time; and not the revolutions of the earth, but the beatings of our spiritual pulses, and the life of our hearts, make our days short or long upon the earth. And you all know how in memory distinctions of times and seasons disappear, and what was long ago as measured by the circlings of the earth is as yesterday to the thoughts of our hearts. You shake your thoughts free from the burdens of many years, and are back again in memory in your childhood's home. It seems long ago; yet, while we think, it seems again but as yesterday that we were children. We are together again an unbroken family in the old home. At the first break of day we reach forth our hands eager for the Christmas gifts. We sit down together at the home-table. We play the familiar games; they are all there—parents, brothers, sisters;—we hear the glad, familiar voices; we feel again the touch of a vanished hand; the old house with the gates hanging just as they did when we children swung upon

them, the fields, the woods, the brook, the snowdrifts, the fire upon the hearth, the fresh world, the happy endless days,—we are back among them again, we are boys and girls at play once more ; it was but yesterday ; yet, as we sit and muse, it all grows far away again, distant as a foreign land, a fair unreality of the past, shadowy as our dream of heaven. We have lived several lives since those first bright days ; we are living in a new world now ; toilsome plains, and stormy seas, which we have traversed, lie between now and then ;—how strange, how near, and then how far, is the depth and distance of the remembered years ! Nay, my friends, events may have come to you adown God's providences during the past twelve months which already seem as though they were both long past, and yet the nearest present ; one moment you feel still their first shock and daze, as though but now the hand of God was laid heavily upon you, and then as you go about life's way of duty, and bear your burden, it seems as though an age had already passed since you learned in your own home what death is ; since you laid your first-born in the grave ; since that hour when the nearest of friends suddenly vanished from your side, and the heart of your life was borne away with the spirit whom God took into eternity. Sorrow breaks the permanency of nature to our hearts, and changes the course of time for us. We grow old in a day. A great bereavement makes one day seem like years of life, and again the years disappear and seem but as one day since the companionship of the friend who left us only yesterday. Do not all great, vital experiences of soul lift us above

these temporal things of nature, and enable us to discern somewhat how to the Eternal God our fleeting earth-periods are of little importance—one of our days to his abiding presence as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day? We mortals are all of us swept along in the flood of the years; yet it seems as if we have power in sudden upspringings of thought to leap, as it were, out of this stream of time and change, and to catch some gleam upon our spirits of a higher element of existence, like God's eternal light; and then we fall back again into the hurrying stream which is our proper element of existence now.

I would impress upon you the profound significance which seems to me to lie in this mysterious power with which we are endowed of rising in thought above the successions of events in our lives, and, while we stand in the spirit above the course of our own years, of looking backwards and forwards and annihilating the distances of time. It does mean a great deal that we have things past, and things to come, as well as things present, in our own consciousness of being. Human memory is more than a brute instinct for the guidance of life; it is a present, conscious possession of the past. I am aware, indeed, that some materialists wax very bold, and imagine that they can explain our free, conscious mastery of time in memory by some supposed arrangements of the atoms of matter in the human brain; but as the colors upon the palette of a painter are not enough of themselves to account for the picture upon his easel without the touch of the artist's hand, so the pictures of memory betray the presence of the

soul-artist, the free spirit within us, which combines at will our past experiences upon our present consciousness of life. And not only our artist-like power of memory over the past materials of life, but also this power which to some extent we have of making our own time for ourselves, like a Creator, our power to make our own rate of life, longer or shorter, as we hold time fast in our thought of it, or let the moments run by us, while we are thinking or acting, betrays something godlike in man. All this superiority of soul to time in memory, thought, and hope, means that there is something timeless and deathless within us—something of the being of the Eternal in the living soul of man. You and I are made of the dust of the earth, and are of yesterday ; but within these bodies bound to the earth, and destined to-morrow to return to its dust, is a godlike something which refuses to measure its life by the revolutions of the stars ; a something which sinks back into its own consciousness of being, and in its brooding thought and love forgets the passing hours and separations of this mortality ; a mystery of spirit within man which by its own thought of God and immortality proves itself to be above the course of nature, and possessed of a divine birthright.

Have I not carried these reflections far enough to lead us out now to some practical conclusions pertinent to these closing days of another year ?

First of all, let us take the help for faith in God's character which the text was intended to give. We wonder how God can live these long ages in the calm blessedness of his presence around our human history of

sin and death ; where is the promise of his coming ? But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing ;—God does not measure his times by our clocks ; a thousand of our years is as one day to him. “ That to me,” said a Christian gentleman recently, as we were speaking of a savage cruelty still permitted under the sun, “ is the strongest objection against the character of God.” And so it often seems. How can God see what we sometimes must see, and be still ? But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing ;—our measurements are not as the measurements of the Eternal. We are in the stream of time, and the breaking and the chafing of the stream over every pebble, and down the rocks, seems interminable. When we shall emerge from it at death, and stand upon the shore, and see what God sees, our whole world-age may appear but as the course of a little stream, easily mapped amid God’s everlasting purposes, and, after all, so short ! Everything depends upon the point of view from which things are judged ; and God looks from eternity to eternity ! You look out in the morning, and see a cloud overhanging the top of a mountain. At noon you glance up, and the south wind still leaves its vapors upon the mountain. At evening you may notice that the cloud is still there, though beginning to be changed by the setting sun into a glory. It has been a short day to you in your business and your pleasures. But had you been on the mountain waiting for the cloud to lift, and hoping for a clear broad view, the hours would have lengthened, and as you watched the time and the shiftings of the mists, the day would have seemed almost endless. We are now under the cloud—a very

little cloud of sin and sorrow, it may be,—a passing cloud—in the large, bright universe of God! We are waiting for the hour of clear revelation; and this world-age seems long. But what is it to him who inhabiteth eternity,—who sees all around? Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Again, these reflections may serve to teach us afresh the real value of time to us. Time, I have said, is simply the rate of the mechanism; hence it is worth in any life simply what it is used for—what is worked out in it. We may see, then, in what sense we should desire long life. It is really in itself considered comparatively unimportant how many days we live as measured by the sun; the important thing is how much we live as measured by the growth of character. It is what we make ourselves to be in time which has eternal significance. We do not need to live a century in these latter Christian days to determine whether our lives shall bear good fruit abundantly, or are dead branches fit only to be cast away. We should look upon our lifetime as a means towards an end—time the means, and a Christlike character, worth God's keeping in his own eternity, the end of our life here;—and if we but gain the end, then, so far as we are personally concerned, it really matters no more whether we die young, or in old age, than it is material whether one has much leisure, or only the needed hour, in which to prepare for an evening festival. The one thing needful is that the soul go hence clothed in Christ's wedding-garment; not how long a time God gives us to dress our souls for that perfect society. Has

he not already given us time enough? The Lord may have his own reasons for keeping us here at our work a longer or shorter time; and he may give us much enjoyment too of these temporal things while he keeps us here; I am speaking now simply of our personal use and need of time in our preparation for the eternal life and society. These few years, more or less, of hope and care, of sorrows blossoming into joys, and pleasures fading into disappointments;—what matter they—these passing moments, at the longest but short, of our earthly preparation for living and loving, for thinking and knowing, for soaring and seeing, for worshipping and resting in the presence everywhere of the everlasting Father? Let our farewell then to another of the years of men be a word of faith; let a pastor's New Year's greeting to a Christian people be a word of good cheer, as from that blessed life, nearer to us now, into whose fullness all the sparkling, troubled, hurrying years of human history at last shall glide. The year just going from us has been the end of this world-age to some who are of us, and but yesterday were with us. Death has opened for some the silent door into eternity at the end of a long path of life on earth, and to others near the midway height; and also the everlasting gates have been opened before the feet of little children. It is so easy for our life here to stop. There is a moment's rustling of the veil which separates the seen from the unseen—and another has passed behind the veil, and a soul vanishes from our company to be seen by others again who have gone before. The grave at which we stood ourselves for the first time to mourn seemed as though we had never

before seen a grave on earth. It brought all the strangeness and mystery of death home to our souls. Death has become familiar almost as life to many of us now. It is so easy for people to die. They are always dying. The least thing may be enough to stop this life in time. These bodies were made to die, as they were made to fall asleep. One who knew called death sleep. Both death and sleep are blessed mysteries of life. It is of little consequence what time the angel of life opens the door of death for us, and we step out of these walls of sense into the broad universe to see God. Whether our hearts shall be pure, and our souls made strong in grace to rejoice in that vision of the everlasting day, is the supreme concern for us.

Several years ago I stood one afternoon in Mt. Auburn, reading the name of the dead from a marble shaft; and while musing, and wondering if there were indeed a spirit immortal, and whither it had flown, I saw in the air the glimmer of a wing, and, as though dropped from out the blue sky above, a bird flew down from heaven, and alighted singing upon the tomb. I was looking upon the place where the dust had been committed to the dust; and there came to me the symbol of the free, glad spirit. And not a sparrow shall fall on the ground without your Father. God knew, then, the flight of that singing-bird from the sky, and the thought of faith it brought to one looking upon a tomb.

Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that with him a thousand years are as one day. Let me leave with you this morning a word of faith from the God of the living who inhabiteth eternity. As we bury the year,

we preach Jesus and the resurrection. He that believeth on me, said the Man of men who knew, hath everlasting life. Behold, for all of us, now is the accepted time ! Eternity closes in around us. We, too, shall soon be out of this earth-time—beyond this world-age—and in eternity. The life which God would give is within reach of the child's hand. It is here for every contrite heart. The Lord Christ who is the resurrection and the life, is still with men, going down with us through these passing days of the old year, and standing before us with his blessing at the gate of the new ; and his greeting is a glad voice from beyond time and death—and our hearts may hear it above the flood of the years ;—My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. A little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

XVII.

THE LAW OF THE RESURRECTION.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."—I COR. xv. 20.

WE have fallen into exaggerated and utterly un-Biblical views of the place and importance of death in our lives. Our common ideas and fears of death are more Pagan than Christian. Both in our belief and in our practice we are in the habit of giving to death an importance which it does not have either in the Bible, or in the nature of things. Consequently, we cheat ourselves of our own hope of immortality, and make a stumbling-block of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection.

Death to many men is the blank wall around life beyond which they look or plan for nothing. It is an abrupt chasm at the end of all paths. Death is nature's final contradiction of man. There is no reason in it. Our popular theology, inheriting fatal, Pagan notions of death, proceeds to invest it with a supreme moral importance. Physical death comes often to be regarded as the greatest crisis through which a human soul has to pass. The hour of death and the day of judgment are practically identified. All this is contrary to Scripture. Physical death is not made the important thing in our Bibles. Physical death does not hold the first place in the economy of redemption. The Bible assigns a subor-

dinate place to our King of terrors. The Book of Genesis, it is true, invests natural death with certain punitive fears ; but it does not elevate death to the rank of the supreme and final transaction between man and his Maker. Sin, indeed, caused the natural possibility of mortality to pass into the certainty of death for man ; but Adam was not commanded by the Lord to live every day as though it were his last, himself a slave bound under the fear of death ; he was commanded to go and work in the sweat of his brow, but with a promise of God in his heart. Man is to work out his time here, and to pass through death, as a being not necessarily subject to death, but born under the higher law of the spirit, and with the possibility of eternal life always before him. And in the New Testament the chief use made of the fact of death is as a metaphor. Jesus makes a metaphor of what we call death. To him sin is death ; the maid whom the people thought dead, he said, sleepeth. The crisis of a soul's history is not in the Bible the death of the body. The fact of physical death and resurrection is used as the symbol of the greater change of a soul from sin unto life. Lazarus died twice ; but had he died and been raised from the tomb by the Christ a third or a fourth time, those outward changes would not have determined what kind of a man Lazarus was ;—his relation to the Christ whom he had known at Bethany ere he died, and who stood before him, the first face which he saw looking with earnest grace upon him when he came forth from the tomb,—that determined what kind of a man Lazarus was ;—his relation to God in Christ was the beginning of the judgment to Lazarus, not

his going down to the grave, or his coming up from the grave. In short, physical life and death in the New Testament hold a secondary place, not the primary; the place of the emblem and metaphor of a spiritual fact and reality. The importance of natural death in the New Testament falls into the background, and the New Birth of the Spirit comes into the foreground. Physical death does not cease to be regarded as an event appointed by God to all alike; but it does cease to be a thing of terror, the final thing, an utter break across the continuity of life, in the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection and the eternal life.

I have dwelt thus far upon our exaggerated and un-Biblical ideas of the place and function of natural death, because I conceive that it is necessary that we should obtain more reasonable and more Scriptural views of what a merely relative and external thing death is, if we would take to our hearts the joy of this Easter festival, and really believe in the doctrine of the resurrection. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection is a stumbling-block to faith because we have allowed ourselves to exalt and to exaggerate death to a degree altogether beyond reason and Scripture. We speak, that is to say, and mourn, as though death were the last law of life, as though death were the ultimate fact of our experience, and then we have to smuggle in our hope of the resurrection as a miraculous exception to this universal power of death. Exactly the opposite is true. Life is the law of nature, and death a natural means to more life and better. Death is the lower fact, and life the higher. Or more specifically, the resur-

rection of Jesus was not the great exception to natural law; it is an exemplification of the higher, universal law of life.

This, accordingly, is my subject stated as a proposition; viz.—The resurrection of Jesus was in accordance with the higher, universal law of life. Death is for life, not life for death, in the ultimate constitution of this universe. The resurrection of Jesus is an instance of the general law that life is lord of death. His resurrection, as our text puts it, is the firstfruits of them that slept. In the opinion of the Apostle the resurrection of Jesus was no more out of the divine order of things, no more contrary to the ultimate law of nature, than the firstfruits of the summer are exceptions to the general law of life which in the autumn shall show its universal power in every harvest field.

Before I proceed with my reasons for this assertion let me make my meaning clearer, perhaps, by calling your attention to the following discrimination.

We believe in the resurrection of Jesus as the great miracle of history. The fact of Jesus' resurrection is the corner-stone of the evidences of supernatural religion. But now, you say, the resurrection was an instance or exemplification of a general law of life; do you mean then to deny that it was a miracle? Not at all. I mean to locate the miraculous under God's general law, in its own proper place in his conduct of the world, where we can see some reason in it and for it. I mean that the miracle was not the fact itself of the resurrection of Jesus, for I hold it to be general law of life that there shall be a resurrection of the dead; but the miracle,

in the instance of Jesus' resurrection, consisted in his appearance to his disciples, and also in the completion of his resurrection in his ascension to God's right hand before the end of this whole world. What in other words was miraculous about Jesus' resurrection was not that God raised him from the dead, but that he was raised before the last great day, and that he should be seen by men, and recognized in his transitional or intermediate state between earth and heaven. The visibility on earth of the risen Lord, before he ascended to his Father and ours, was exceptional, out of the common course, or miraculous. And the God of the living had his own sufficient reason for making this one exception. It was partly for our sakes, that the world might believe. Was it not due also to the Person of Jesus that he should not wait with all the saints for the day of final redemption, even the redemption of the body, but that, having been made perfect through suffering, he should have ascended at once to the throne of God from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool? The miraculous, thus, in Jesus' resurrection pertains to the manner and time of it rather than to the essential fact of it. It was the firstfruits of the resurrection—an exceptional fruit appearing before the harvest which is the end of the world.

If you should see a tree break into blossom in the month of June, and the next morning find the fruit already ripe upon the bough, you would say, That is extraordinary! It is not indeed contrary to the nature of the tree that fruit should ripen on the bough, yet contrary to all our experience of growth that the fruit

should ripen in a summer's day. That fruit would be a miracle upon that tree ; yet not in itself contrary to the nature of the tree, but only to its ordinary conditions of fructification. The fruit itself would be perfectly natural, only the method of its growth extraordinary. And it would not be impossible to conceive an enhancement, or quickening, of nature's forces which might cause a plant to break into fruitfulness contrary to our experience of its usual times and seasons. Somewhat so, in the view we are now trying to win, is Jesus' resurrection a firstfruit of the tree of life ;—not in itself contrary to the law of life, but in its manner and time out of the common order. In the miracle of his resurrection we have only to think of God's quickening, or anticipating, by his power the course of nature, not as violating any real principle of it.

It always is helpful to faith to locate mysteries where they will not be in the way of what we do know, and to put miracles in their proper place under higher and universal laws. All we need then to warrant us in believing in some exception to God's general method of working is to find some good reason for it, as we do in the anticipation of the general resurrection in the instance of Jesus Christ.

Having thus endeavored to state and to discriminate my thought, I now proceed to give some reasons for the belief that it is true. I must condense these reasons, however, into the briefest possible space, hoping that they will expand in your own thoughts.

I find, first, no little Scriptural evidence for the belief that the resurrection of Jesus, although exceptional in

time and manner, is an instance of a general law of resurrection. This was Jesus' teaching concerning the resurrection. He answered the Sadducees of his generation not merely by asserting his knowledge that the dead shall be raised ; but he placed the fact of the resurrection upon the fundamental principle that life, not death, is God's first law. " But that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed, in *the place concerning* the Bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living : for all live unto him." The fact that the dead are raised, therefore, is no isolated, strange event, no exception to the large nature of things ; for life is the rule, and death the apparent exception in the universe of the living God ; all are made to live unto him ; all souls are made capable of existing in some vital relationship to the God of the living. This, according to Jesus' word, is the highest law of human nature that it should live unto God ; if there is to be eternal death, that death must come in as the exception, as the loss of a possible good, as the falling back of a soul from the kind of life for which it was created to the lower powers of corruption. It is born for freedom and life in constant relation to the living God ; if it is to perish it can only be by making itself, through some inner falsehood, subject to corruption.

Again, the Lord's own resurrection is set forth as an event which could not possibly have failed to occur. We say Jesus' resurrection was a miracle, that is, contrary to what might have been expected—a great excep-

tion to the law of death. But that is not the way the Scriptures put it. They say, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God—whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death : because it was not *possible* that he should be holden of it." "Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope : because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption." It would be impossible for death to hold a principle of life like the Spirit of that Man of Nazareth. It would be a violation of all law should the Holy One be given over to corruption. There is something inherently inconceivable and impossible in such a thought. How can Holiness see corruption? how can life itself be given over to death? Impossible ! It would have been a miracle, had Jesus *not* risen from the dead. It would have been a violation of the inmost principle of the creation, had the mere dust of this earth held him as its own forever. It would have been a miracle without reason, a miracle not against the ordinary course of nature merely, but a miracle against God—the living God,—had he not risen from the dead—the firstfruits of this power and order of divine life in the creation.

Once more, the same truth which we have already found suggested in Jesus' teaching concerning the resurrection comes out clearly and grandly in the Apostolic Gospel of the resurrection. What is that wonderful fifteenth chapter of Corinthians but a setting forth of the glorious law of the resurrection? First the historical fact that Jesus was seen after his death is solemnly attested ; then Jesus' resurrection is declared to be the

firstfruits of the whole harvest of life which is to follow; and then this process of the resurrection is shown to be in the largest and profoundest sense natural. It is a spiritual outgrowth from this body of death. The nature of the resurrection—the fashion of the body of the resurrection—is in accordance with law;—if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body—the latter is just as much in the divine order of things as is the former;—the creation is made and constituted for the higher spiritual body as much as for the lower natural body. The method, also, of the resurrection is in accordance with law;—first the God-given seed—then its quickening in the earth—then its springing up out of its earthliness into its own element, and its being clothed upon with its own proper form and texture, as God gives “to each seed a body of its own.” The whole process of the resurrection in its successive moments and stages is regarded in this chapter as in accordance with law. “Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven.” The Apostle who wrote this chapter of the Gospel of the resurrection was not standing dazed before a miracle; he saw no Almighty-ness snapping like cords the laws of nature in order that man might be delivered from the bands of death. He did not see nature resistlessly dragging man down to death and destruction, and then, by a sheer act of God’s power, the whole gravitation of nature downwards towards death suspended, and the law of death in nature broken, as a life suddenly came forth on the other side

the grave, and ascended, and gained the everlasting heights. Not such was the truth revealed to the Apostle who had seen the risen Lord, and learned that he was the firstfruits of the resurrection. He has caught a glimpse into the first principles of life which go deeper than death. He has looked up, and there has been revealed to him something of the larger spiritual environment of earthly things. He has seen this little material crystallization of things—this jewel of the creation—which we call nature, in its true setting in God's eternal purpose and order. He has followed out into the spiritual realm the ways of God through these natural spheres, and apprehended the unseen continuities of these earthly forces. He has learned, in one word, that the resurrection which he preaches is the promised fulfillment of the laws of life which have been with God from before the foundation of the world. Hence there is no surprise—no thought of broken uniformities of nature, or miracle of power—in this whole chapter of the resurrection. Though it stirs our souls to read it—though we repeat its words with trembling lips when we bury our dead—though its vistas of revelation are magnificent beyond all prophecy of our hearts,—still this chapter contains in itself no word of surprise, no point of rapt exclamation;—it is calm as a chapter of science. It is a lesson from the science of the higher order of the creation. The stars which differ in glory are no more miracles in the sky than is the resurrection of the dead to the Apostle who had seen the risen Lord. The sun and the moon are no more exceptions to the ancient order of the heavens than the souls of men raised from

the dead, and clothed upon with the shining glory of the celestial, are out of the divine order and harmony to the eye of the Apostle who has seen the risen Lord.

This, I say, then is clearly and unmistakably the Biblical teaching of the resurrection. It is in accordance with law. It is in the divine order of the creation. Why should it seem otherwise to us? Why should we regard it as a thing incredible that God should raise the dead? Partly because in our pagan philosophies we have exaggerated the place and importance of death in the world; partly, also, because we have fallen into gross and carnal imaginations of the resurrection and eternal life, which would be violations of natural law most difficult to conceive. Planting, however, the standard of our faith firmly upon this high Biblical doctrine of the resurrection as the final fulfillment of the law of life, let us now survey the field of nature and see whether we have learned anything to make it a thing incredible that God should raise the dead.

Let us indeed be thoroughly honest with the truth of nature. We do gain from our little knowledge of things a tremendous conception of law. When we stand upon a law of nature we have footing upon a solid thing; to ask a man for the sake of faith to give up his foothold on natural law would be to ask him to walk upon the clouds; his imagination may dwell up among the clouds, but his reason cannot. More than that, to invite a man in the interest of faith to shut his eyes to any fact of nature before him, is to ask him to be false to the truth of God in his own soul. But is there anything which we have seen upon this earth which contradicts the spiritual

law of our full redemption? Apparent contradictions to this Gospel of the Spirit there are, but not one that does not grow thin when thought through; not one which is real. On the other hand there are positive facts arranging themselves now in lengthening lines over which we look straight out into the unseen and the eternal. The simple truth is that we cannot begin to understand or interpret this bit of the universe which we see and call nature, except as we regard it as existing in the midst of some spiritual environment, and at a thousand points running out into, and continuous with, something not seen as yet just beyond itself. As I cannot think of a star except as I think of it as in the sky, so I cannot think of this visible sphere of things, or nature, except as existing in some invisible realm and larger Presence. The living God must be close to everything. And particularly, in confirmation of this Scriptural faith in the divine orderliness of the resurrection and eternal life, let me now merely suggest these considerations. First, as already intimated, we do know this that death is not the only law of nature; there is also the law of life. Secondly, it is a fact that of the two laws life, not death, is the higher and prevailing power so far as we can see. The earth was dead, so they tell us, ages ago. There may have been a seed or two of life dropped from God knows where upon its cooling crust. Now how this earth lives! There is hardly a cliff too barren for nature not to hang some blooming thing upon it; and the old earth teems with life. Furthermore, even here, where death reigns, life has been growing higher, more complex, more capable of larger correspondences with things. Between the

lowest living thing and the brain of man there is a difference of life wide as the distance between the earth and the heavens. That first infinitesimal point of life has no world with which to establish relations larger than the microscopic field in which we have looked and discovered it, but we have established already relations of thought and knowledge with the farthest stars. Plainly then, without any doubt, life is something stronger thus far upon this earth than death. Notwithstanding death, life grows to be more and richer. I argue from this evident higher law of life on the earth nothing just now with regard to individual immortality ; but I reason thus :—If in this part of the universe which I do know I can see that things are made for ever more and better life, and not for death ; that life on the whole thus far has proved stronger than death ; and, furthermore, that the whole effort of nature has been to develop a life capable of the largest things, not stopping with birds that fly beyond the hills, but reaching ever on up to minds capable of thoughts that fly beyond the stars ; if life, larger, richer, more capable of everlastingness seems thus the manifest destiny of nature, then I may reasonably credit the revelation which bids me believe that God's own thought is to bring life to everlasting triumph in some final deliverance from death, and that the living God will not pause nor tarry until he raises from this earth a race of the children of God capable of living forever in perfect unison with himself and his whole creation.

But this is not all. What is death, so far as we can see what it is ? Here is a minute living thing in a glass of water. You turn the water out. That living parti-

cle is now mere dust upon the glass. Dead,—that is, it is no longer moving in an element corresponding to its capacity of vital movements. What is death then? A living thing is no longer in harmony with its surroundings. It is thrown out of its own proper correspondence with things; it is dead. Death then is a relative thing. It is simply some wrong or imperfect adjustment of life to external conditions. But death may be partial, then, not entire. A part of the body may be dead. A man may be dead in some relations, and still live in others. There is a sense in which we die daily. Parts of us are thrown out of vital relations. The body may begin to die long before it is dead. Death is but a relative, negative thing. Life is the principle, the force, the law; death the limitation, the accident, the partial negation of God's great affirmation of life in things. Now see where this thought leads. It points to two conclusions. Death is the sundering of certain relations of life towards outward things; therefore, when the body finally is wholly dead and buried, when all these physical relations are broken off, so much of life is certainly gone; but nothing else in a man, if there is anything more of him, is dead. Death is a relative thing; it only means that certain correspondences have ceased. You must prove, then, that a man is now alive only to oxygen and hydrogen, and such things, before you have any scientific right to speak of him as dead. "You may catch me, if you can find me," said Socrates as he let his body go. And the Scripture says, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." There is a man walking through a field, thinking of home, or with his mind in

large correspondence with principles and truths ; and suddenly a flash of lightning strikes his body down. How far into the life did that electricity penetrate ? The lungs certainly have ceased to be in vital relationship to the air ; that is, the man as to his lungs is dead. The muscle of his heart no longer responds to any vital stimulus ; so far the man certainly is not alive to things around him. But did the lightning pierce to that thought of home in his heart ? Did that flash from the sky put out that reason just then expatiating in the truth ? The lightning touched the mortal body ;—who knows that it reached to the spiritual body ? Perhaps that is more subtle than electricity ! Death we know to be often but in part. Why then should not that force which thinks, that power which loves, shaking off in the dust of the earth its imperfect correspondences of this body with things, itself continuing to be, be hereafter clothed upon with still higher and finer powers of contact and correspondence with all nature, and with the living God ?

This view of the partial and negative power and function of death opens a further rational possibility of life, which you will find discussed suggestively in Mr. Drummond's recent book on "*Natural Law in the Spiritual World*," and which may be stated thus : We have only to suppose a living soul in perfect adjustment to God, and all God's laws of things, to conceive of a being possessing eternal life. "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Eternal life is harmony of being with the true God, and the risen Lord. In such perfect

adjustment of being to God, and his laws, the finite spirit would exist in its permanent, because perfect, form or celestial fashion of being, its final spiritual embodiment. Eternal life would be the perfect harmony of the inward and outward conditions—the final union of the spirit of the just made perfect with God and his universe. Such, at least, is the largest conceivable fulfillment of the creation,—a conception not in itself contrary to nature, but in accordance with the whole law of its beginning, struggle of life upwards, spiritual evolution, and consummation.

I turn aside here from the pursuit of these inviting analogies of life to some conclusions befitting this Easter morning. My sermon has been that, according to the Scriptures, the resurrection and eternal life are no strange miracle, but the fulfillment of nature in conformity with law. And we have seen that the analogies of life up through nature, combined with all that we really know of death, do not contravene, but lend confirmation to this teaching of the Scriptures that in the resurrection our life shall be made complete, and the end of the creation reached. So God's idea of man from before the foundation of the world shall be realized in the kingdom of the risen and ascended Lord.

Now, then, if these things be so, it follows that our true life consists in our coming at once, in our own souls, into the right, and fullest possible correspondence with that which is the real and eternal element of life—with God, and his righteousness. We are made to live in perfect harmony with all good, beautiful, and true things, or in communion with God. The only thing to be

feared is spiritual death. That is non-adjustment of our hearts to God. The soul out of harmony with love and truth may become as dead as that animalcule left dry upon the edge of the empty glass. To attempt to live as an immortal soul without love, and not as in God's presence, is to dream of living in a vacuum. The true life is to know God. Even now they are most alive who have in pure and loving thoughts the largest relationship to all good. The wages of sin is death—death piercing farther than that flash of lightning could reach; death creeping into the heart; death clouding the eye of the intellect; death, as Jesus said, destroying the soul in Gehenna. My brethren, there is one thing which I cannot but fear for myself and for you; one thing greatly to be feared here and now for any man who is not eager to bring his own heart into glad and loving harmony with whatsoever of God or of Christlike things may be revealed to him—and that fear is the loss of one's own soul. It is the soul itself which we are now to gain or to lose. And I am afraid of the death which I see already going beyond the physical man, benumbing the conscience, and chilling the very souls of men. And though I cannot find any Scripture to teach me that countless heathen men are to be shut up in eternal darkness without ever having so much as seen for one moment of gracious revelation what a Christian Being our God is, or to lead me to think that any living soul of man shall be dropped forever from God's hand unless that soul in its selfish frenzy puts out its own eye for the Light, and takes its own death-leap out of the hollow of the pierced hand of Love; although I cannot

with a good conscience before God preach to you any human conception of the nature of eternal punishment which I cannot first to my own thought bring under the law of eternal righteousness and love—and you would not believe it if I could ;—nevertheless, with an unblushing conscience, though with a hushed heart, I can and will preach to you upon this Easter morn this principle of eternal life and death : He that hath the Son hath life ; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life ; he that loveth his life shall lose it ; whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. There is a sin unto death which cannot be forgiven. For it is a deadly thing, poisoning the soul. The soul of the man who shuts God out from himself is as a dead thing. It is as dead as the lungs without air are dead. And before the thought of a soul sinning unto death, an Apostle stood still with bowed head, saying, “I do not say that he shall pray for it.”

While I can hardly conceive of such men as I know now as miraculously preserved by God’s power, with unworn capacity of feeling everlasting torments, and being ages after ages—longer than a bird could peck away a mountain—continued in all their faculties just such men as I know them to be now,—with the same good nature about them, with the same capacities for some noble deeds, with as much heart and soul for better things as even in their sinful worldliness they do show now, yet put by some appointment of God beyond the pale of redemption, the moral possibility of which is still left in their own nature ; and while I can find no such

imagination as this, and many another common conception of the nature of eternal punishment, depicted in the Bible, and could not understand it, but only hold my peace, if I did ; while I will not burden the few simple words of the Christ with any imaginations of men, least of all with my own : nevertheless, there are some present facts of experience which enable me to conceive—I do not say it shall be so—I only say, in view of some present consequences of sin, I can conceive of a soul shrinking in selfishness, and shrivelling in lust, and consuming in sin, until it becomes at last so dead that neither good man, nor angel, nor Jesus himself, could or should have further thought or anxiety for it ; so dead that no friend searching for it could possibly ever recognize it again ; so dead that the tenderest child of God might have no more trouble for it than the children at play on our sunny meadows have care for the dust of life beneath their feet ; so dead as to be in its ashes of manhood, and its own loss of the spirit, beyond hope—beyond even that hope for a soul which was first to live and shall be the last to perish, the hope of souls in God’s own heart of love ; so utterly and eternally dead as to be buried from the remembrance of the living, and to be lost as a free spirit even from God himself,—punished, as the solemn Scripture puts it, and as any being who ever shall turn from the full, gracious revelation of God in Christ would deserve to be punished with “eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed.”

God alone knows what shall be. This conception,

also, of the possible degradation and loss of personality in eternal death is only our trembling projection upon futurity of one line of the present deadly consequences of sin, and we do not know. Nor do we find united and harmonized in one clear revelation in the Bible all the lines of our present moral experience, and all intimations of the Scriptures themselves concerning the future life and its eternal issues. This conception of final spiritual death, which I have just admitted as possible, does not involve necessarily the idea of annihilation of being, or any final loss from the sum total of created existence ; but it implies the possibility of complete degeneration, through processes of sin continued beyond redemption, from personality and the life of personality. Retrogression through sin may in reprobate individuals be conceived as going so far as to involve the loss of the type of moral personality in which, and for whose perfect life, they were created. If science knows nothing of annihilation in the realm of physical force, it has read significant hints of reversion in the ascent of life. Is that a commentary of nature upon the Biblical revelation of the possibility of final moral arrest and retrogression of spirit—of the loss of soul in the world to come? But, however we may venture at times to realize what spiritual death may be in our conception of it, there is certainly contained in the same law which renders eternal life possible the possibility also of eternal death ; and this possibility of final shame and loss is not concealed from us in Jesus' Gospel, nor is it wholly hidden from our reason in the nature of things. The Bible plainly presents righteousness as

gain, and sin as loss, of soul. "I am come," said our Lord, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" "Fear him that hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell." "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

The Lord is risen indeed; but every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. Wherefore comfort one another with these words,—yes, even with this great word, "The trumpet shall sound." For why should we Christians ever think of that great voice, and that last trump, as a wild alarm resounding through space—an awful voice of doom? Shall it not be the full, joyous melody of grace made audible everywhere at last, and not one discord left? that archangel's voice the harmony of all sweet voices of peace and good will on earth? The trump of God! ringing out upon the universe the great joy of the long expectant Christ, swelling and echoing to all worlds the peal of life's full triumph over death! The trump of God! filled with the harmonies of the eternal love, of notes so pure and soft that the

last sick earth-child, saved by grace, shall awaken with a smile to hear heaven's music in it ; and resounding also beyond the stars, as the voice of many waters, as the sound of a great host, proclaiming that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ, and heaven shall be forever where once were time and death, and God who is light shall be all and in all !

XVIII.

LIFE A PROPHECY.

"For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God."—ROMANS viii. 19.

WE are living in what may justly be called the prophetic season of the year. This month of May is to the months to come what Isaiah is to the rest of the Bible. Nature now in the living trees upon the hill-sides has her companies of prophets, and in their midst we may feel, as the king among the prophets felt, like another man. We all of us have been conscious, for moments at least, of a fresh joy of life and exhilaration of spirit in the glad prophetic spring-time of nature. May we never grow too dull of heart to feel the touch upon our spirit of the hopefulness of May!

I wish this morning to take my parable from nature in its present prophetic aspect; I would look upon our whole life in this world as itself a brief prophetic season, like this month of May, in its hope of the full, ripe life to come. It seems to me that many reasons justify us in regarding our time upon this earth as a prophetic period of existence, a season full of prophesyings of better things to come. What can our human life be unless it be a book of prophecy? We cannot understand many a strange line in it unless we read human life throughout as a book of prophecy. Life does speak

often with far-away, mystic, prophetic tongues. We can begin to divine the meaning of many a human life only as we study it as we would a chapter of sacred prophecy ; it is confusion and tragedy, if it be not a prophecy of the Lord. I shall proceed, accordingly, to mention some of the prophetic elements in our present life.

First : Our own being is prophetic. Every man of us is himself a prophetic being. We are made and organized for something more and better than as yet appears. We are inspired with the thought of the unseen and eternal. We have in us, and carry about daily with us, a sense of something beyond. Our personal being is an expectation of the creation waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. Each man of us has a prophecy of future rewards and punishments written in his own conscience. And does not human love have always hidden in its heart a prophetic hope of the future and its completions? The word of the Lord still comes to men through their own consciences and hearts, saying, There is a higher law, and you have your birthright in a kingdom of righteousness and truth. Would you go seek for some new prophet of the Lord to declare to you the life beyond? Listen to your own soul. Make silence within, and listen to your own better self. You are that prophet whom you seek. You walk this earth a king of nature, and a prophet of another world. You are chosen from your birth and called of God to be a witness to the higher order of spirit, and to live as an heir of the kingdom of God.

Secondly : Our human relations are prophetic. What I want just here to make intelligible is the fact, that our

common human relations—the relations of the family, and the best and purest things of human friendship and social life—have at their root a divine life, are blossoms and fruits of an eternal Love, and, when rightly interpreted, are prophetic of the perfect relationships and the complete society of the kingdom of heaven. This is a profound yet simple truth, the reasons for belief in which I know not whether I can begin to put into words as they seem to me to exist in the most real human life; yet if we cannot measure in definite speech the faith which life brings to us, or rather the faith which God through life brings to us, we may recognize the vital truth that human love, the purer, stronger, and deeper it is, does hide in its heart a more and more assured prophecy of some heavenly completion.

You will at once admit that these relations of the family and of human society are of worth. They are a good for man. They reach back into some universal good for man; they have their roots and their life, we believe, in something better and holier which was before them all—in something divine. Accept your family-relations and your human friendships as gifts of God,—nay, as revelations to you of what God in his fatherhood and the Son of God in his brotherhood is,—and then all these human relations through which God himself comes near to bless you, will grow doubly sacred to you. There is a presence of God also in them. They are of holy worth. Any sin against them, any violation of these sacred human relations, touches something divine. To sin against my brother-man is to sin against God. In his fatherhood, as the Scripture literally ren-

dered says, every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named.

We own at once in our hearts this sacred, ideal worth of these human relations. They are divine good with man and for man. Observe further in this connection how broken, partial, and tragic, often, these human relations and friendships seem in this world to be. They all of them suggest something which should be complete, holy, perfect; and then they break off, and in the poor actuality of the present remain but suggestions of what should be. Our human relations seem in this world to have been worked out upon some plan of goodness just far enough, they seem to have been carried on in this life just long enough, to make us think of what the perfect pattern might be, and to long often for its completion. Our best earthly society is a partial, not a perfect good, a beginning of what might be, the consummation of no good thing. Often the family is rudely broken by death just at the season when all its relations of father, mother, brothers, sisters, are coming to their maturity, and the family in its completeness is just beginning to be realized. There is evidently eternal worth in such relations of life, but just as we begin to find it, we lose it. Those who made each other's lives so complete are no longer dwellers in the same world together.

Love here has too often only the beginning of its good—the precious, yet too quickly broken fragment of its own blessing. Put then together in your thoughts these two facts—the self-evident worth of these human relations and friendships, and their present incomplete-

ness;—and do you not see how through their partial good the prophecy of the Lord of life begins to come into our lives? The earthly fragment which love has received was given as a promise of the Lord; it was never meant as a completed thing. The present, broken good is a divine suggestion to us of the perfect life in which all that is now fragmentary shall be made complete. We do not yet have the whole of any good. We already, in other words, have so much given us from God in the family and our human relations, and their worth, that we have all right to trust that we shall in due time receive their completion. We shall reap in due season what the Lord himself has sown for us. The partial good is a present prediction in our lives and in our homes of the final perfect whole. All earthly, human good is evidence of a divine presence with us, and a promise or prophecy of the better things which are to come when God shall be all in all. The best and fairest human family, having its root and life in the Fatherhood of God, is as yet but in part; it is as the bud of May upon the tree of life; we see now only the bud, and its prophetic richness of color; when that which is perfect shall come, we shall know then, as now only the angels of God can know, for what heavenly fruition, for what perfect clusters of life eternal, the Christian families were given in these their earthly buds.

I have not yet in these statements led you to lay hold, as one may, of the strong principle of reason underlying this prophetic interpretation of our present human relations. These statements rest upon the prophetic principle which we find in nature pervading all

growth, and pointing ever on from partial good, and lower types, towards the better things to come. The only difference is that when the geologist, or the biologist, reads the record of progress and ascent of life upon this earth, he can now read the Scripture of nature backwards, and having before him in man's present form and brain a fulfilled prophecy of nature, he can easily interpret, reading backwards, the lower prophetic forms and types. What from the beginning upwards was one constant prophecy of man's coming is now our history. But the Christian, when he now looks forward and thinks of the coming of the second man, even the Lord from heaven, has still to read the present prophetic signs and tendencies of things forwards by faith. Nevertheless, we proceed upon the same principle of reason whether we read the creation backward or forward;—that which is good, but which is in part, is always a sign and herald of that which is perfect, which is to come. All partial good is prophetic. That is a first principle of nature. This is also a great principle of faith. It is a profound principle, reaching, I must believe, to the bottom of all natural evolution, and yet simple as the hope which will not die in the heart of human sorrow. It is a principle of life so true, and so strong to bear our faith, that you will allow me once more to endeavor to render this present deeply prophetic significance of human nature intelligible.

Let me put it again in this way. You walk out into a garden or orchard, and you take in at a glance the present predictive aspect of the vegetation. Every green thing is a promise. The buds of May upon the

apple-trees promise the gathering up of the summer's rays into the rosy fruit of autumn. We might reason rightly in this way concerning the promise of the spring: That blade of wheat, that opening bud, we know, is a living thing. It comes from out some secret of life—we should say from out some divine secret of life. In comparison with the dead earth it has higher worth. Being a thing of life, it is a thing of worth. As compared with the lifeless soil it is a better thing—a good—some higher thing, beginning to be on earth. Then this good thing, this gift to the fields in their verdure of something better than dead earth, is also a growing good. The verdure is not a stationary thing, a fixed color left once for all upon the face of the earth. Life is an increasing, a growing good. There is in the life of the fields and in the tree-tops an onward movement of nature, a perceptible progress from day to day of a good already given towards something better to come. There are in this budding, swelling life manifest tendencies of nature forwards. Nature is now evidently looking forward to meet some greater blessing from the sun. So now every bush is a prophet. But, you remind me, this predictive aspect of the spring-time we know and take for granted without reasoning, whenever we see a bud of life, because we have gone many times in our experience along with nature in the course of her seasons, and beheld her prophecies of May fulfilled in the ripe colors of October. But what man of us has seen, or knows, the firstfruits of the resurrection? We have verified over and over again the prophecies of nature in the spring-time, but who has come to

us with a positive verification of this present prophecy, as you call it, of human nature? We do not see on earth the perfect fruition of the human family upon God's tree of life. Such, then, I allow, is the difference between the spring-time prophecy of nature, and the spring-time prophecy of our humanity;—we have verified the one by its fruits; we must wait for the final verification of the other. But that is all the difference. We simply wait for the full verification of our faith in the harvest-time of the Lord. That is all. The principle of reasoning is the same. The truth of the prophetic import of the beginnings of any divine good in the creation is the same, whether we read the growth of nature backwards in our experience, or read the growth of human nature forwards in our hope of immortality and the perfect society which shall be. Divest yourselves for the moment in your imagination, if possible, of your knowledge of the harvest, and conceive that you are looking with an inquiring eye upon the first May whose leafy life you have ever seen. Tell me, without experience of the harvest, would not nature now have to the eye of the understanding an air of expectation? Observe the buds to-day, and to-morrow. Note the beginnings of something of higher worth than the earthy elements at the root of every living thing. Mark the signs of an onward movement, the silent march of the mighty forces of life onward, the partial yet advancing victories of life in the fields and the orchards! Would there not be in all this expectation of nature enough to warrant the hope, the belief, the certain conviction in your own mind, although you had

never seen a fruit-tree standing with ripe apples in the rich autumnal light, that there must be some blessing waiting in the after days for the earth, some fulfillment to come of such apparent promise? And suppose further as you were pondering these things and asking, what is the meaning of the beginnings of good and the strivings of nature in every bud? what does this fact of growth prophesy?—suppose some one had come to you,—some man whose face made you trust him at a glance,—and he had taken his seat beside you on the green grass, talked to you of the harvest, and told you that he had seen the full glory of which the fairness delighting your eye is but the beginning; suppose he had pointed to the vine before you and said: “Where now through the rough bark you see those breaking tips of green shall hang in the harvest-time a cluster of ripe grapes; that blossom beginning, as though half ashamed of being seen, to open its heart of color to the sun, shall some day be a perfect peach;”—conceive he had continued thus to depict the fruits of the life which you see only in its bud, yet in words so colored with the imagery of the harvest which you had never seen, that you could but half understand his meanings;—would you not at once believe his interpretation of the prophecy of the spring? would you not say, That is natural, that is what I should expect; although I can hardly imagine it, some such glory yet to be revealed nature evidently is waiting for with this glad, earnest expectation of May?

And thus the Lord of the harvest has come to us. He sits by our side, and talks in his divine way to us children, who have not yet seen the harvest, of his

heavenly fruitions. So to us in the midst of these prophecies of our lives and our homes, to us among our opening friendships, with our children and our hopes, the Lord of life has come ; and although he has many things to say which we cannot understand now, though we are but children trying to learn what shall be hereafter from such things as now appear, he says to us,—I know ; I speak that which I have seen ;—and his words are confirmed to our reasons and our hearts by all which we have seen and know of the beginnings of good in this world, and of the worth of the best things in our own lives, by the whole prophetic aspect, in short, of our human nature and our human hearts. Thus Christ's witness to God and heaven answers the prophetic history of nature and humanity, and the witness of the two agreeing in one is the assurance of our faith. Only we do not, we cannot, realize how prophetic to Jesus himself everything in our human lives and homes must have seemed. From his heavenly experience he could read downwards and backwards what is as yet all prophecy to us. He stood as One looking upon us and our history of sin from the other end of God's eternal purpose ; as the student of nature among us men now stands looking back from a man's knowledge down the course of nature through the past of this earth. So to Jesus everything which we are and do had its worth and reality as, judged from eternity, it is our preparation for what shall be. All our fragmentary virtue and happiness were of value to him as he saw our present, partial good bound up in the final whole of love to God and man. All our discipline and pain of growth were to

him endurable, and to be welcomed, as he saw the life of humanity in its perfect fruit in the new society of the kingdom of heaven. And the disciples, catching his prophetic spirit, looked forward through all trial and seeming success of evil to the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. So they could suffer gladly for the hope of the Gospel.

There is a third prophetic element in this present life, to which I should now allude. We have thus far considered the fact that man himself in his own being is essentially a prophet of the Lord upon this earth, and also the truth that our human relations in their eternal worth, but present incompleteness, all bear witness of something diviner to come in which they shall be made perfect. A further prophetic aspect of our life here we may find in the present relation of our spirits to outward things.

Not to be allured just now too far afield by a subject in which our thoughts may wander endlessly, let me put the substance of what should be said at this point in this wise. We have in these bodies a partial good. Our present embodiment in nature is a good, but it is not a complete and permanent good. The union of soul and body we can readily understand is a gift of God ; but it is not yet altogether good. Our embodiment is good so far as it goes, and for a little time. It is the best thing on this earth ; there is nothing among all material things more wonderful than the brain of man. The stars in their courses, the infinite net-work of attractions which constitute the order of the heavens, excite our wonder and awe ; but are they so marvel-

lous manifestations of creative wisdom and power as the living centres and constellations of nerve-cells, and the balanced forces and ethereal fineness and complexity of the processes which the spirit that is in man finds given him in the organism and harmonies of his brain, for the purposes of recording and comparing his thoughts, and executing his free volitions? Man himself in his present embodiment is the consummation of nature, and the last wonder of the creation. But, nevertheless, this body is not enough for the spirit of man. You can look in thought farther than the eye can see. You can be in the spirit where you cannot will your body. This present body is good, but not good enough for the diviner spirit which is in man. It is a gift of God; it brings us into immediate correspondence and unity with the whole mighty world of sense and sound. It brings nature to the door of intelligence. It brings fragrance and beauty and light to the presence of spirit. Well may we exclaim with the poet-philosopher Herder, "Embodiment is the last of God's thoughts in nature!" Nevertheless we die. We are not yet perfectly embodied. We are not yet in final and complete harmony of spirit with the world of things. We have in these bodies God's thought of what is to be our perfect relation to things, carried just far enough to make us see how good it is, and how much still remains to be accomplished, before it shall be finished in the perfect embodiment of a spirit. Body is a gift of God to spirit, but not yet in these mortal bodies has God's whole gift been bestowed, his whole thought and work of our embodiment been brought to its completion. Our present embodiment, in

other words, is prophetic—wonderfully and profoundly prophetic of what shall be. Yes, in these bodies so wonderfully made, yet so incomplete, we have nature's prophecy of the resurrection, and the earthly preparation for the perfect, spiritual body which shall be. In these mortal bodies, in which we begin to live and to be formed for immortality, the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.

If to any of you, therefore, the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the final consummation of all things in the new heavens and the new earth, seems a thing incredible, I grant that it is beyond the definite grasp of our imagination, and that the nature of the spiritual body may be to us a thing beyond conception, as the fruit of the autumn would be inconceivable to the child who, having never seen a ripe apple, holds for the first time in its life an apple-blossom in its hand. But I do insist that the prophetic nature and law of things—the prophetic significance of these present bodies in their temporary adaptations to our spiritual uses—is not a fact beyond our knowledge, or contrary to any reason; I hold that the earnest expectation of the whole creation from the first organic cell up to the brain of man waits for the revealing of the sons of God; I would claim that the Christian doctrine of the resurrection and the consummation of nature, as laid down in St. Paul's chapter of inspired interpretation of God's thought, is in accordance with the present prophetic nature of things, and that we can and should believe in the word of God which confirms the whole up-look and on-look of the creation; and we may wait, therefore, in the patience

of hope for the glory which the heart of man indeed cannot conceive, but which shall be made known in us who are risen in Christ, when that which is perfect shall come.

I leave at this point this great argument from the prophecy of the Scriptures of nature, conscious that it is stronger than any words of mine have made appear, but hoping that, at least, what has been said may help you to hear more clearly the word of divine promise coming to you through your experiences of this present life. These best gifts, these most precious things of life, which are left with us often just long enough for us to begin to appreciate their worth, and then are taken from us, are indeed words of prophecy to our hearts. God's own prophecies of eternal life are sent to us through the best and purest of present things. Your griefs are true prophets of the Lord. Your most sacred memories of the past, and its worth, are the Lord's prophecies to your souls. Nay, the whole history of redemption thus far, from Moses to Christ, from Christ to the last regenerated soul, is the prophecy, growing and broadening with the years, of the kingdom of God which we pray may come.

If we are learning to look thus upon all things in our present lives as prophetic, we shall find in this view of life a world of cheer and courage. It causes every day a vast difference in our feeling and heart for life, if our Christian faith makes a prophetic May-time of our brief season in this world. When we sit musing over the things which are past and gone, it makes all the difference between the Pagan sense of loss, or the Christian sense of gain through life, whether we read the chapters

of our book of life simply as history, or also as prophecy. Many a chapter in our past which is broken, strange, fateful, if read as history only, becomes another thing when we interpret it as prophecy.

There was once in your life a happy chapter of childhood which is all past and gone now. If this world be mere history, and our life a mere earthly plot—all its romance over at death—then that chapter of childhood is indeed so much remembered loss. But if this present season and system of things is, on the other hand, as the spring-time of the ripe universe which is to be, and if our life here is one prophetic providence; then that chapter of childhood is not simply a memory of brightness, and happy careless days; it is a type of the true childhood of the kingdom of heaven. That other chapter of a completed struggle and trial—that memory of endeavor and disappointment—is not simply the record of a wasted strength and a broken hope; it is the record written upon the character of the soul of the purpose and dutifulness which shall find their fulfillment in the strength and freedom of the world to come. And that chapter of happiness—that chapter of love and home which began to read like a beginning of some story of a better world, and which came to a sudden end in the mystery of death,—if read as history, is indeed but the first act of an interrupted drama, a broken melody, a tragedy of life;—and to remember is to mourn! But, my friends, read that prelude of love and home as a prophetic song! Then to remember will be to hope! “I looked behind to find my past, and lo! it had gone before.” You had such companionship, such support, such cheer overflowing the

hours in that happy past? Think of those things. Be not saddened by keeping them in your thoughts. Mention on every fit occasion the names of those who have gone before. Those happy memories are the Lord's own promises of eternal life in your hearts. Come to your church, and delight in thinking of those whom now we cannot see in their former familiar places. God has given us the memory of the just as the sure word of prophecy of that final, blest society in which they with us shall be made perfect. Let your eyes rest in joy and in peace, morning and evening, upon that picture of a vanished face—upon that better living picture which you carry safe in your own heart. That picture is not a memory merely; it is a prophecy. "He is not here," said the angel in the tomb of the Lord who was the first-fruits of the resurrection. "Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him." Walk still with glad, springing step through these fresh May fields; gaze with happy eyes upon the beauty of earth and sky; let the sunshine find your hearts still open as a child's, although now you may walk alone where but yesterday you walked with another—although now you may be nearing the close of your little life here, and in old age the world begins to grow lonely around you; you hear indeed only echoes of other days—you have but the shadows of memory for the realities with which once you lived—it is silence and mystery around you where once were the clear hopeful voices of life—and you cannot understand;—but think what means this silence of earth which God is making around the heart of old age? what means this emptiness of the present world? what mean

these echoing voices of the past? Is it not all prophecy? It is the silence of earth in which the soul begins to listen for the new song of the great multitude; it is the sense of loss in which God enlarges the heart for the gain of death. The silence, the loneliness,—what is it but God's word to old age, hushing the soul in expectancy for the revealing of the sons of God?

My friends, we shall be far happier, stronger, and better, if we are willing, whether in youth or age, to make one sacred prophetic Scripture of our life here. What the Old Testament is to the New; what Isaiah desiring to see the things which were to be revealed was to St. John leaning upon the bosom of the Lord;—such our present is to our hereafter, our life now to the glory which shall be revealed.

Let us all—the young and the old—build our lives into this hope of the Gospel, and seek in all dutifulness and consecration of spirit to the Lord Christ so to live from day to day, that when this book of the prophecy of our earthly life shall be finished, and God shall open it, and read it with us from beginning to end at the last great day, the fulfillment of it may not be in retributions, and eternal death, but in righteousness, joy, and peace, in the Holy Ghost.

XIX.

THE LAST JUDGMENT THE CHRISTIAN JUDGMENT.

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."—JOHN. xii. 31.

"And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged."—JOHN. xvi. 8-11.

ACCORDING to the Scriptures, Satan was not seen falling like lightning from heaven before Christ sent his disciples to proclaim that the kingdom of God is at hand. According to the Scriptures, Satan was not finally judged before he had opposed himself hopelessly against Christ. "Now," said Christ, "is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

According to our traditional understanding, Satan was from the beginning an absolutely diabolical and condemned spirit, who had been cast down from heaven before he took part in the sin of this world. But one of the earliest Biblical notices of Satan, written hundreds of years before Milton's *Paradise Lost*, represents him as appearing with the sons of God before the Lord, taking his stand upon an apparent principle of justice, and consequently finding a hearing before the Lord. In the

book of Job, and throughout the Old Testament, Satan is not yet portrayed as the enemy who has become absolutely hardened in hate, and hurled himself in hopeless hostility against God. The Satan of the Old Testament seems to have still "one foot in heaven." He appears, not as opposing himself against God, but at first as the tempter and accuser of men; next, a step lower down than where he stood in the book of Job, he is seen in the vision of Zechariah as opposing the high priest, or the theocracy represented by the high priest, for whom the angel of the Lord pleads.

The Satan of the book of Job shows traits which are not altogether unlike certain evil dispositions of our human nature. He appears as a tale-bearer and sower of suspicions among the sons of God. He uses truths of religion as the vehicles of his own hurtful dispositions. He makes a principle of righteousness a means of heartless persecution. Somewhat later in the Biblical history of Satan we find that this habit of suspicion, misrepresentation, and partial truthfulness, has become more reckless and wicked, and in the vision of Zechariah the Lord who had permitted him to try the faithfulness of Job, rebukes him for his slanderous opposition to the High Priest.

The Satan of the Old Testament seems to have been a reactionary spirit. He takes his stand upon a partial truth, or an incomplete good, to prevent the realization of the perfect good, and to keep men from coming to the full knowledge of the truth. Thus, in the garden, the serpent represents the claims of natural right and natural science against the divine commandment and the

revealed way of life. Again in Job, Satan is solicitous for an uprightness of simple obedience to God's law, and fears that Job's piety is merely the result of God's favor, and not a perfect submission to the law.

The evil has, indeed, no standing-ground in this world except upon some good which God has already made. The lie fastens always upon some truth ; the Satanic power seeks to use the lower good against the higher blessing, and the partial truth against the growing knowledge. Satan takes his stand upon a reactionary and false conservatism in his accusations of the brethren, and he comes also among the sons of God to oppose the true progress of God's purpose of good.

The evil one of the New Testament is a more fallen being than the Satan of the Old Testament. He has been growing worse as God has been showing himself more gracious. As the light of revelation has brightened, the sin of this world has grown blacker. At first the evil one was opposed to man ; now he cannot withhold himself from tempting God in the Son of man. Once he assumed to represent certain principles of righteousness, and pretended to be a servant of Jehovah ; now he hardens himself against God's revealed will, and seeks to overcome the anointed Christ. The devil, according to the Biblical representation, has been growing worse, and becoming more malignant, as God's purpose of grace in Christ has been coming out more clearly and grandly in history ; and now, before God manifest in the flesh, he is seen to be the evil one, the enemy, the prince of darkness, that wicked one who has no part in the kingdom of God, the father of lies, who is now fully dis-

closed in his hatred to the truth, and shown to have been a murderer from the beginning. So Satan is finally manifested and judged by his final opposition to Christ. He ends all possible opportunity for himself by his enmity to God in Christ. He shuts himself wholly out from heaven by entering as a spirit of hate into the heart of the betrayer of the Christ. Consenting to the crucifixion of Love, he has henceforth not a single right, or truth, or principle of justice left, by which as of old he can claim a hearing among the sons of God. What might have been, if, even at the eleventh hour, Satan had thrown himself upon the mercy of Jesus Christ; if, instead of taking Jesus up into a high mountain, and exhausting his malignant art in the attempt to deceive the Son of God, he had cast himself upon his mercy, accepting as his desert God's condemnation, and praying for forgiveness from the Lamb of God;—concerning this Jesus has not told us, and we do not know. But this fact does appear clearly and distinctly in the Biblical history of Satan,—he was finally condemned, he was cast out as beyond all redemption, when it was evident that he had hardened his will against the final and perfect manifestation of God in Jesus Christ. Job had seen Satan among the sons of God before the Lord; the prophet still later had beheld him accusing the high priest before the angel of the Lord;—Jesus said, “I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven!” As Christ foretold the coming of his hour, knowing that his love must needs judge the Satanic hate which would crucify him, he said, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of

this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Satan's day is over. He has proved himself to be Satanic beyond divine redemption before the Holy One of God. This world, also, upon the revelation and judgment of its principle of sin before the cross of Christ, passes into a new, and for it, likewise final era. Henceforth its preliminary trial, and provisional judgment by the law, are over; since the Lord was crucified, its last day of Christian trial and judgment has begun. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." The Christian dispensation of the Holy Ghost is, and morally must be, the beginning of the end. This day of grace is the season before the harvest in which our history is ripening for its judgment. Before pronouncing that word of judgment upon Satan,—“Now is the prince of this world cast out,”—God had waited until Christ had come, and Satan had condemned himself before the Christ; surely God will be as patient with men, and none shall receive his final judgment before the law of nature, or from Moses' seat, but by the word of the Son of man. Christ's coming and speaking brings life to its crisis; the world, Jesus plainly declares, “had not had sin”—final, irretrievable sin—in the state of nature before Christ came. All shall receive final Christian judgment—we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Every man is to be finally judged in view of Christ, and his personal relation to Christ. Thus Jesus said, as he looked forward to his hour, and to the new world-age which should begin from his death and

resurrection : "The Comforter, when he is come, shall convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged."

Thus far I have followed up to this solemn text the Biblical teaching concerning the development, and judgment through Christ's coming, of the principle and power of sin. It appears that the Satanic principle or power in our history grows more diabolical, forfeits all claim upon the forbearance of God, and becomes fully ripe for the judgment under the final revelation of God's love in Christ. No prophet before Christ could have said, and Christ himself could say only in anticipation of his hour of crucifixion, and his final glory: "Now is the judgment of this world." "The Spirit shall convict the world in respect of sin because they believe not on me; and of righteousness, because I go to my Father; and of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged."

Thus far the Scriptural teaching is definite. Until Christ came, Satan had still, as it were, "one foot in heaven." Sin comes to its final judgment before the cross of Christ. Sin is to receive its final doom from God only as it shall have proved itself to be absolutely sinful, or incapable of redemption, before the Cross of atoning love.

I am not arguing this proposition now from reason, nor from our Christian sense of the judgment which we might expect from God; I have been showing that in

the Scriptures sin does not assume its final form and permanence, and Satan even is not seen to be utterly Satanic, until the day of grace comes, and Christ is crucified, and goes to the Father. The same Biblical truth appears in the parable of the husbandmen who were not cast out until, after having rejected messenger after messenger from the king, at last they slew his beloved son. Then forbearance had nothing left to give, and they were destroyed.

Thus far the Scriptures. If we find in this Biblical representation a principle of far-reaching ramification, although it may seem hazardous for us in some directions to follow it up and out to its last consequences, we should not on that account let go the grasp of our theology upon a great truth of the divine judgment which has its firm roots in the Bible. It will prove more perilous to faith and to all evangelistic effort, if we do not gain and keep a strong confidence in the essential Christianity of God's method and purpose in the final judgment of sin. We should not suffer either our hopes or our fears, our prejudices or our traditions, to interpret any Scripture for us. And there is hardly a truth or principle of the Gospel which may not be applied—which in some one's logical use of it has not been abused—to the hurt and peril of souls. Thus the Scriptural teaching of the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit may easily be so preached as to restrain human effort for the conversion of souls. The doctrine of predestination, or the expectation of the second coming of Christ, might logically be laid as a check upon missionary endeavor; so also the half-truth of a moral trial

and judgment of the heathen under the light of nature and through conscience might be dragged by logical inference into the way of Christ's commandment to preach the Gospel to every creature. But any Biblical truth or principle should be welcomed by us so far as we can understand it, and trusted by us to take care of its own proper consequences. Our caution and our fear need not concern the practical results in the world of any truth; our only anxiety should be lest we ourselves miss the Scriptural truth in its largeness and in its integrity, or stumble in our own short-sighted and uncharitable applications of it. Hence we should not hesitate to accept this truth of the Gospel that all men are to be finally judged by their personal relation to God in Christ, and that now the Holy Spirit brings the crisis of character and the beginning of the end to all souls to whom it witnesses of God in his Christian revelation of his love. According to the Scriptures, and by no remote inference from many texts, the principle of the last judgment is the revelation of human character in the light of Christ;—the final judgment shall be for all souls a Christian judgment—a judgment before nothing less searching and decisive than God manifest in Christ.

I do not disguise from myself the fact that this simple Biblical principle of the final judgment of sin through Christ, and man's relation to the supreme revelation of God in Christ, is a principle of very wide and deep theological application, having possibly in it the power of a better theodicy, or vindication of God's ways towards man, than our New England theology has as yet attained by means of its governmental maxims; but the infer-

ences from this Biblical truth would require a volume rather than a sermon for their consideration ; my present object is practical and personal. I am not preaching here to antediluvians, to whom God was revealed chiefly as the Almighty Sovereign ; nor to infants whose life has not yet developed into actual moral personality ; nor to idiots whose souls nature holds still half-formed until death shall give them birth in spiritual freedom ;—I am preaching to men and women who have been permitted to live in the day of grace, in this present, accepted time of the Lord, and whose characters are forming under the light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. You and I are living, and deciding what we will be, in this world-period which takes its date from the birth of Jesus Christ—this world-age through which the Son of God waits expecting until all enemies shall be put under his feet—this world-age in which his Gospel is to be preached to every creature, and which shall end in his final coming to deliver up his kingdom of grace to the Father—this present world-age which, because it is the day of the Son of man, is also the last day of the world before the day of judgment—this Christian world-age which is, as no age of the world could have been before Christ ascended, the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, the age of the presence everywhere of the Spirit of Truth : and now, in the preaching of the Cross, in the Christian church and its sacraments, by the means of grace, and through the accumulating evidences of the Gospel of redemption and the growing power of Christianity in the world, the Holy Spirit is already convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment : of sin, because sin in this world-

age, if it persists, must harden itself against God's love into unbelief of heart in his revealed grace ; of righteousness, because through the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of the majesty on high God reveals the perfect righteousness, even the righteousness of love in which He has willed from eternity to conduct this universe ; of judgment, because the principle of sin has been laid bare, and its absolute unworthiness and guilt brought out in its rejection of the truth that would have led it to repentance, and the love that would have taken it in forgiveness to its own pure heart.

The application of this Scripture is one of solemn significance to ourselves ;—we are living in the last days, and there is no world-age of fuller revelation of God's eternal purpose of grace to follow this age of the Holy Spirit. Behind us is the age of the creative wisdom of God ; behind us is the age of the law and the covenant of Jehovah ; behind us is the age of Messianic promise. Christianity is the latter day to which prophets looked forward ; Christianity, or the Messianic kingdom, was as the end of the world to the people of Israel. And what to them was to be the promised end, is behind us ; all those ages of preparation the purpose of God in Christ Jesus has passed through ; the times of ignorance at which God winked are gone by ; the childhood of the world is passed ; man came to full moral age and responsibility in the day of Christ. Behind us lie all these times of preparation, and those provisional seasons of the law and its schooling ; and behind us, also, is the age of Christ's humiliation and finished work of redemption ; and, long since, the day of Pentecost was fully come ;—

now is the accepted time, when all the Gentiles to whom the Gospel shall be preached must meet Him by whom finally all are to be judged ; now is the accepted time of human history ; now is the day of salvation for all people. Behind us are those preliminary ages, those days of divine preparation for our salvation, and before us is the end—that great day of the harvest of history ; before us is the crisis which Christ, because he is the Saviour of the world, must bring ; before us the possibility of the great decision ; before us the open gate of the mercy of the Lord, and the necessity of determining whether or not we will have hearts to enter the kingdom of heaven ;—and, beyond our decision of character, for Christ or against him, follows the final judgment of grace !

This fact, consequently, that we are living beyond the preparatory ages and provisional institutions of God's plan of history, in these latter days whose end is the final judgment, is a truth which well may arouse the indifferent, and which should make us all realize the great privilege, and the equally great responsibility, of our present opportunity to gain a Christian character for eternity.

I proceed, therefore, to call your attention to some ways in which this truth of the Christian judgment now lays hold of our lives. I ask you to notice right here that I am bringing to you no mere theological speculation ; neither does the personal point of the truth which I wish to enforce depend upon any doubtful question concerning the future life. We are standing upon a Biblical truth, viz., that this is the day of the Lord, and that the day of Christ as man's Redeemer is the last day

of human history which ends in the final judgment, and from the basis of this truth of the Bible, in view of this final age of the world, I shall now urge only such considerations as may be drawn directly from the facts, and are capable of verification to a large extent in the experience of men here and now.

First, then, I would say, in this dispensation of the Holy Spirit, every man and woman must stand or fall alone—each one for himself. It has not always been so on earth ; it may not be so in God's judgment of mercy with all classes and conditions of men now ; but it is so with us. Of old time the child of the Hebrew parent hardly had his individual rights and responsibility ; the children were visited with the punishment of the father's transgressions ; the unit of life, the unit by which God's temporal judgments in the early history of Israel must be measured, was not the individual, but the family. The innocent must often suffer with the guilty ; whole families—women and children and slaves,—whole tribes and peoples must be sacrificed in the wars of the Jews, during those preliminary and preparatory judgments of our world-history of sin and death. Such was the early military necessity of providence. But it is not so now. Since Christ came, the Spirit of God deals with souls more directly, personally, and individually. No priesthood intervenes ; men need not go up to Jerusalem to worship. God's Spirit is in all places, and, wherever the Gospel is preached, men may choose to obey or disobey the word of the Lord which comes to them in the name of Christ as the truth of the Spirit for their own souls. Of old time the hopes even of the most pious Israelites were

bound up in the expectation of the people of Israel. Only as members of the theocracy could the Messianic glory become theirs; it was the nation that was to be glorified, and the individual should receive of its honor and glory only in and through his connection by birth and circumcision, in faith, with the kingdom of Israel. But Christ has individualized grace. He creates, indeed, a new society of souls. But now through no external observance may we hope for part in his kingdom. We must be born again. We cannot depend upon any outward fulfillment of the law and the covenant—upon no legal righteousness;—no one can be finally blessed because of any connection with any other men, with any chosen family, or with any line of promise. Since Christ brought the sin of this world to its judgment by his presence on earth, every man of us must meet personally the crisis of character, and stand or fall for himself before God. Christ by his coming to men calls men ever to themselves; they cannot go away from him mere moral children; he calls to a decision, a personal decision; the soul comes to full moral age before Jesus Christ, and chooses its own life. And every time the word of the Spirit is brought home to us through Christ, we become by our personal response riper for the last judgment. So, then, under the dispensation of the Holy Ghost in which we are living, every one must give an account of himself. We cannot go into the kingdom of heaven as the Israelites might have hoped to go up to Mount Zion, into the Messianic kingdom, by families and by tribes; we must go alone—as individual souls—every one in the narrow way—each in the determina-

tion of his own heart, and to give an account of himself to his God.

Secondly, all of us who are living in the knowledge of the Gospel, and in this dispensation of the Holy Spirit, are forming our characters and ripening for judgment in view of the divinest motives to goodness. No one of us can grow to manhood now, and live, and die, as though Jesus Christ had never dwelt among men revealing the Father, as though Christ had not been crucified, condemning by his death the sin of the world. The life of Jesus Christ is as much a fact in our lives as the sun is a fact in our skies, and no man, by merely choosing not to regard it, can make the present fact of the Gospel of Jesus Christ cease to exist for him. The light is shining now—the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and though we would hide from it, we cannot conduct our business in this Christian era, we cannot live a day now, as though the sun of righteousness had not risen, as though there had never been a Christ on this earth from God in heaven. It is morally impossible, in a land girded and studded with Christian churches, for any intelligent man to grow up and live without meeting before him in his own path, and more than once, the form of the Son of man—without being obliged, whether consciously or half consciously, yet really, to take some personal position towards Christ and his cross. As matter of obvious fact, God has so made the life and the death of Christ a part of modern history, and an essential element in the life of the world in which we live,

that it would be impossible to conceive that any of us could go from any place in this country up through death to the bar of a just and omniscient God, and be fairly and thoroughly judged by Him, without the question being asked as the most decisive question of our destiny, What account, in the plan and purpose of your earth-life did you take of Jesus Christ? What, in the conduct of your life, did you do with this Jesus which is called the Christ?

Thirdly, in this world-age of the Holy Spirit before the day of judgment, we are forming our characters under the most searching and decisive tests. Conscience is the first judge of man; obedience to conscience is, so far as it goes, a determination of character. The light of nature is undoubtedly light; it brings out distinctions of colors, good and evil, in human hearts. Conscience pronounces sin worthy of punishment; the light of nature is sufficient to reveal the insufficiency of our own righteousness. But, under the law of conscience alone, no man is, or can be, put beyond the pale of possible gracious redemption. Character, under the light of nature alone, cannot become absolutely hardened against mercy, and pass, by a natural process only, beyond the moral possibility of supernatural redemption. According to the Scriptures only the sin against the Holy Ghost—the sin of utter rejection of the last, fullest revelation of God—the sin against the Spirit sent to plead with the world from the cross of Christ,—that alone is the sin for which prayer can no more be made—the sin which hath never forgiveness either in this world or the world to

come. For all previous sin—for all the sins of the ages before the cross—Jesus could pray as he gave up the ghost, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” But now, under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, sin is not only neglect of the light of nature, not only transgression of the law; but it may be a turning from goodness itself, and rejection of the revealed God. In proportion as the atoning love of God is made known, and put away from a soul, sin is also striving against the Spirit of God. As God reveals more fully and more gloriously the principles of his righteousness and the fullness of his love in Christianity, in that proportion does the sin of the world grow worse and more condemnable, and persistence in sin approaches the rejection of all that God can do to redeem a soul. To all to whom the love of God and the unspeakable attractiveness of the righteousness of God are declared in Jesus Christ, the moral possibility is thereby opened either of their giving themselves to Him with all their hearts, or of hardening themselves against Him with no prospect of any more attractive disclosure of God’s goodness than is made in Christ, by which to break the evil will which may even now be growing hard against the supreme Christian motive to repentance and unselfishness.

Jesus realized that his presence upon earth brought to men the fearful possibility of sinning hopelessly against God’s very grace, and putting themselves beyond the pale of his redemption; and the knowledge of the fact that his coming was, and must prove to be, the crisis for human life, seems at times to have weighed upon his

spirit with a sadness beyond expression. Thus he said to the Pharisees, "I judge no man;"—he would not judge, if he could help judging; but he remembers that mercy is itself sin's last judgment, and he adds, "Yea, and if I judge, my judgment is true." "For I came not to judge the world;"—not for that, not that he might cast a single soul into deeper condemnation, had he come from the Father;—his whole sincerity of soul goes out in that protestation: "For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." But he knows that rejected salvation is final judgment—that redeeming love must prove that to be unworthy of eternal life which it cannot save;—and he adds, as the moral nature of things compels him to add, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day." Jesus, then, would not judge—but, if rejected, how can he help judging? Rejection of the supreme good, when that good is fairly revealed, is the condemnation of the soul that can reject it.

Yet Jesus will wait expecting until the last great day, before his enemies shall be made his footstool, and he shall sit upon the judgment-throne. Then, after the Christian era, shall be the end of the world. Then, not till then, shall the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord give up his mediatorial kingdom to the Father that God may be all and in all. Then our last judgment shall be the disclosure of what we have become in this Christian era of our opportunity, and under the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. There can be no judgment more final than this last Christian judgment of character. He

that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

XX.

LOOKING BACK UPON OUR EARTHLY LIFE.

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."—LUKE x. 18.

THESE words refer to a definite moment in Jesus' life. That same hour in which he sent forth the seventy, he beheld Satan fall from heaven. Yet that was a prophetic vision of the Lord. When he saw Satan falling, Jesus was in spirit above time, beholding as one finished whole, from the beginning to the end, the history of God's conquest of evil. While the seventy were going forth to win their first unexpected success in his name, the Lord in prophetic anticipation was looking back upon his work, and theirs, as a work already accomplished; as even the devils, to their surprise, began to be subject unto them, his Spirit went forward to the final triumph of redemption, and as one looking back from its completion Jesus beheld Satan fallen. In the joy of that moment of prophetic faith Jesus had gone beyond his own life of sacrifice, beyond the conflicts of his Church, and he was as the Word with God looking upon the redemption of the world as one completed fact, and beholding sin as a power forever fallen.

You will observe, particularly, this position as of one already beyond time in which at that moment our Lord was standing, and beholding the eternal consequences of

his own life, when he saw the final fall of the Satanic power. For my sermon depends upon the possibility of our imitating in some human measure this example of our Lord, and for moments, at least, of faith taking like him positions above ourselves, as though we were already looking down upon our own earth-life. There is both an imitable and an inimitable element in every attitude of Jesus, and in the various incidents of his experience of our world. He is in all things our example; and we are, therefore, to approach him, throughout his conversation with men, expecting to find in his experience of our life even up to his cross something in which he is as one of us, and in which we also may be as the Master was in the world. But the more we seek and find these imitable elements in Jesus, the stronger, also, will grow the impression that there was in him something beyond all human imitation—a diviner something in him pervading his life, and to be recognized even in its most human incidents. So in the spiritual exaltation, to which our text bears witness, there was manifestly a diviner consciousness and certainty of vision than we can attain in our best moments of faith;—not as the Master can we, being in the spirit, put this world at once beneath our feet, and stand beyond history in God's eternal triumph over sin. Not thus, as the Christ from God, can the spirit of man be transported wholly from the midst of the present into the eternal world, to lie at rest among the fulfilled decrees of perfect Love, looking back upon the future as though it were already past, and beholding the fallen Satan.

We must recognize, then, the more than human con-

sciousness and diviner certainty indicated by this spiritual experience of Jesus ; nevertheless, we may find in it something, also, for our imitation. By availing ourselves of such powers of faith as we do have, we may seek to throw ourselves forward beyond our own lives in this world, and to look as from some higher position out among the eternal realities back upon these present scenes. We may gain thus truer views of what is the use and purport of this span of our life between the cradle and the grave.

My sermon begins by asking two things of any who would profit by it. It asks you to take for this hour at least your own faiths for granted. The interrogation-point has, indeed, its rights in the pulpit ; and some of us are born with a disposition to punctuate everything experienced in this world with an interrogation-point. But I do not raise just now any of those questions which life is so often asking of our hearts. I do not seek now to look searchingly through those shadows of doubt which, although they sometimes fall thick and dark across our thoughts, are only the shadows of earthly things, and which show, as the shadow proves the existence of a sun, that there must be beyond them, and above, the true Light in which we shall see light. I ask you, rather, for this hour at least, to believe your own souls, and to take your own spiritual faiths for granted. Give yourselves up to them, and let them lead you whither they will. Then my sermon makes this second requirement of any who would profit by it. It asks them to use freely and boldly the Christian imagination in aid of faith.

Throwing ourselves forward in the pure imaginations of faith into the world to come, let us seek to look back and down upon this world as though we already were beyond it. Surrendering ourselves to our faith, and with our powers of spiritual imagination lent to the aid of our faith, let us seek humbly to imitate our Master, and look upon our world as he looked upon this earth, when, as from a position in eternity, he saw Satan fall from heaven.

In the first place, if we look upon our own lives as one looks back upon a way already trodden, and a work already accomplished, we shall gain a truer sense of the proportions of things. If we can succeed in transporting ourselves beyond the present, and regarding its occupations as already past ; if we can draw back, as it were, in our own souls from the events of now and here, and regard our whole life, past, present, and future, as one undivided and completed whole ; then we cannot fail to gain a more just estimate of the real proportions of events in our lives, and to correct, as in a large view from beyond, our present sense of the relative importance of things. And just this true sense of proportion in life is hard for us to keep in the nearness of present things ; yet it is essential to large, happy living that we should gain and keep it. In order that we may do this let us take moments even in the midst of duties or of cares when deliberately and thoughtfully we strive, as we are doing now, to throw ourselves forward through the years, and beyond our own death, and, as from above, survey the event, the trouble, the desire which now may seem to us so imperious, so strange, or so important. What as we

look back from beyond the day of our own death is our life? What the relative heights and depths, the comparative lights and shadows, of the things among which we are now in our lives?

Some of you here present may have sailed some summer afternoon from Mt. Desert towards the open sea. You noticed, as you floated out of the harbor, and looked back from the sea, that the mountains did not stand in the same groupings quite, and no longer showed towards one another the same magnitudes, as they seemed to do when you were among them, and looked up to them from the foot of some near height which rose just before you. That which then seemed the highest becomes a lesser hill as you measure it from your boat at a little distance off; and when you are far enough out at sea to take the whole island in your eye, then the mountains stand before you as God made them, each in its own place and proportion, and you know which is the lesser cliff, and which is the greatest of all. And in the retrospect, also, rough places grow smooth, the fissures in the cliffs, across which you could hardly find your way, are seen to be but reliefs of shadow upon the sunny face of the rock; the thought of their brokenness and hardness vanishes, as your eye follows with delight the lines of the great picture which you look at under the sail from out at sea; while over all the storm-beaten crags and heights there falls a mellow and purpling light. Oh, my friends, be sure whenever we shall be far enough out in eternity to look back and see our lives as one whole, we shall understand better God's grouping of events in them; we shall know then how all the while He who sees the end from the begin-

ning, and beholds all earthly things framed in the quiet charity of heaven, has looked in the good pleasure of his love upon the history of this world, which to us in the midst of it seems often so broken, overshadowed, and wild ! And certainly the more freedom of faith we can exercise in letting our hearts sail away from the present and the near, taking in as one view our own past, present, and future, and contemplating our life as one divinely ordered whole of existence ; the happier will our thought of life be, and the more just our estimate of what things are small or great in our lives.

In the second place, in so far as we can put ourselves in the exercise of our own faiths beyond this life, we shall gain in many respects a different, and in all a more just estimate of our own real attainments. We shall see more clearly what we may expect to win for ourselves from life. Look down now upon what you have made, or are making, for yourselves in this world from this higher position after your own death. Measure what you are seeking to attain by its worth as judged by that estimate from beyond. From this point of view let us seek to determine what are the real attainments which a human being may reach in this world. The difference between a man's fictitious and a man's real attainments may be measured by conceiving that man to have come through death to his immortality, and then by asking what can we imagine him to have in himself which he may keep there, as the result of all his toil here. That artisan, for example, has stood up faithfully for years to his work. He dies. The arm loses its strength, and the hand its cunning. What can he have gained by years of faithful

work in making square-joints, honest insides, or lines true to an infinitesimal? What can the workman be conceived as keeping hereafter as the reward of all his labor under the sun? Not the eye, not the arm of flesh; yet the doctrine of the resurrection stands in the Scriptures as the pledge that our life here and hereafter is to be in all its powers one continuous life; and though this body shall return to dust, the discipline and capacity of the man, which is to be gained through the right exercise even of these bodily powers, is something which may count in the life of man forever. Even in the honest and best exercise of his bodily senses a man may be training himself for the quick and skilled use of those powers of spiritual embodiment which shall succeed these mortal powers. That artist, for instance, who one evening as we gained the crest of a hill, with an exclamation of delight, counted instantly five different hues upon the horizon where my duller eye had only seen at first glance one resplendence of the setting sun, may have gained in that quick sense of color a power which shall be carried on as a possession of the soul into the spiritual body, enabling that trained artist's spirit hereafter to see with instantaneous and enhanced delight the hues and harmonies of color of the new heavens and the new earth.

Hence I venture to say that the training and discipline of any power in the honest work of a lifetime may be so much real attainment for immortality—so much gain carried in the man himself through death into the world of larger opportunity. A man therefore should perform all his labor on this earth not as though what he does now is all of it, but as an heir of immortality.

Take another example from the business of men. A merchant spends his powers in amassing a fortune. Put that merchant forward in your spiritual imagination of him beyond the years. Look back upon his whole life from some point after death. He lives on. What is his gain from the world? His property has been divided. Another name is upon the sign over his store. Other customers than he once recognized buy at the counter where he has been long forgotten. What has his life profited him under the sun? I am not asking just now of his personal character and final judgment before God. I am asking of his possible attainments;—what has that man by any possibility carried from the work of his life beyond the years? what lasting attainments has he made in that store from which one day he went home to die? It is certain that he brought nothing into this world, and that he could have carried nothing out. No thing;—not a creditor's promise to pay; not a mortgage upon any earthly thing; not a single thing from all his merchandise and all his gains! But shall an honest, able life of business count then for nothing among the real attainments of immortality? Nay; that man has carried something in himself beyond the grave. That faculty of quick judgment; that power of broad, clear comprehension of a situation; that strength of purpose, that firmness of will, that promptness of decision, that capacity for self-denial and self-restraint; that habit of moderation in the midst of abundance; that human kindliness, helpfulness, and charity, also,—these qualities which have been both the means and the results of his success on earth, these attainments of the man, are not

for nothing in the judgments of eternity. Death shall not rob the man of these ; they are in him, and of him—his personal worth—and they do not belong to the mortality which returns to the dust. They are powers, also, for other worlds, and capacities formed here for life in other spheres.

Or that scholar who has followed truth, though at times he knew not whether truth were a phantom mocking him from out the universal night, or whether the truth he thought he saw was a glimmering through this twilight-world of the glory of the face of God ;—that scholar shall leave his books of science behind him, and as he looks back from beyond the gropings of his life-long studies he may laugh at the folly of all his wisdom among the children of this world ; but not for nought has been the devotion of a soul to the truth. That longing love of truth, that joy of his soul in truth believed, and willingness to suffer for truth found, shall prove his enlargement of mind for the knowledge of eternity. If in aught he was tempted by fear of consequence, or by love of applause, or by pride of intellect, or by clamor of the people, from the love of truth and of God, that shall prove indeed his loss and failure of mind for the revelations of the other world ; but his love of truth, and his inner faith in it kept ever sacred, his life-long willingness to be taught of God, and openness of mind to all messengers of the eternal Truth, come they from earth, or sky, or the hearts of his fellow-men,—this shall be the scholar's reward—his disciplined and exultant power of mind to comprehend all mysteries, and to sound the depths, and to sing praises from

the heights, after he shall have gone hence to be taught by the Lord's angels who excel in strength to behold all things in the one true light.

Whatever may be your personal circles of concern in life, whatever the occupations in which providence may circumscribe your present, if you would understand what may be your permanent gain from life, and what are the personal attainments which you are really, that is, eternally, making now, let me invite you, in the exercise of your Christian faith, boldly at times to run forward before your years, to seek, if only in spiritual imagination, some point of view out in eternity from which to judge what you are doing and gaining now. For our belief in our immortality, when we make earnest with it, and really accept it, is not a mere dream of shadowy existence after death ; nor is it a general and vague expectation of a life so utterly unlike and broken off from the life we are now living that what we are doing and gaining here and now counts for nothing hereafter. Not that is Christ's revelation of the world to come ! Not such is the full Christian expectation of life beyond death ! The connection between the hereafter and the here, between the now and then, is organic, vital, inevitable. It is close as the connection between school-time and manhood. It is a continuity of existence woven of the tissues of the soul, and strong as the loves of human hearts. Jesus, in all the essential elements, powers, and characteristics of his humanity, is the same man Jesus the day after as the day before the resurrection. Turn utter sceptic if you can and must, and say, I die ; but when we take our natural faith in our own spiritual birthright for granted,

and when we say we believe the Gospel of the resurrection, let us not then make a half-truth of it, and live as though our immortality were only some vague, vast, formless future hope, and not a present, practical fact.

Jesus lived for two worlds at one and the same time. He was the son of man who was in heaven, as the Scripture says. All true, deep life must have something of the sense of heaven in it as a present fact. Certainly the power of sustained enthusiasm for all work, the capacity of growing hopefulness, and the charm of perpetual youthfulness through life, must be the present power of our immortality in us and over us. And no man can rightly estimate his own striving in this world, or measure, as he should, his own attainments, unless he takes also this larger view, and will look honestly down upon himself, as one might look back from beyond his own grave.

We are led, thus, to the third remark that only as we strive to throw ourselves forward into the life beyond, and to consider our whole existence here as it is in its relation to the man and his life then and there, can we form a safe estimate of the *worths* of things. Such and such opportunities are brought now within reach of a young man or woman. What are they worth? So many weeks or months of study, of training, of perseverance in some choice, will bring such and such good—professional success, social success, pleasant days, agreeable friends, so much prospect and joy of home, and healthful, quiet age. I am not questioning the wisdom or the need of these common estimates of the worth of life. It is good for us, at times, to make them. There

are crises when we must put our lives into honest earthly balances, and weigh them. But we are capable of measuring things by a truer standard, and of weighing life—the whole of it, and all things which it contains—in a larger scale. Run merrily in imagination on through your years. And, following Christ, and so with untroubled heart, go happily also down through the valley at the close, and venture in the thoughts of your hearts out into the unobstructed breadth and distances of the life beyond. Then turn and look back, and consider again your estimates of things. What as you look back, as one already beyond this little life, are the real worths of things? their final and unalterable worths? If our own deeper, truer instincts should fail us here, we have the sure word of God. Jesus Christ who could easily put himself in the spirit beyond this world and its history—who already when among men began to judge this world as though the last day were present and the Son of man upon the throne—Jesus Christ left no doubt as to what in the retrospect of eternity is of worth before God. It is the new heart. It is the soul born of the Spirit of God. It is the regenerated man. The image of Christ in a human heart is the gain of eternal worth. The Gospel-measure of worths is Christ-likeness. And all other attainments shall fall short, if they are not made rich unto God through the grace of Christ. Given the new, right heart, and even now, as one looks forward to his own death, he may think, That, also, some day it will be pleasant for me to remember!

Suffer me once more, before I close, to commend to you this Christlike habit, so far as by faith we may

imitate it, of putting ourselves for moments at least far away from our own present, and looking down upon ourselves, as it were, from some higher sphere. For there are some special times and seasons when a moment of down-looking, as from above, upon ourselves, may be of the greatest benefit or comfort. In the midst of the vexations and petty annoyances of things, it is good, like Jesus, to go off for a moment, and to be among the stars. With the angry word rising to the lips, it is good for us if, for an instant, we can succeed in being in the spirit as on the Lord's day. The mere effort to rise out of the present, and to take the large, far look, gives an inward command of soul over things before us, a calmness for trial, a strength for emergency, a courage for danger, a heart even for death, such as can be won in no other way.

And not only in times of temptation, of stirring passion, or of difficult duty, do we need this spiritual disenthralment from the present, if only for moments of prayer, in order that as sons of God we may quit ourselves like men. There are also common human states and conditions which are neither altogether happy nor safe for those who are never able nor willing to judge themselves and others as though life were past, and the hour for the final thought had come. Thus, equally in success or in adversity, do we need to rise above ourselves in this larger judgment of our present. Certainly in adversity, if a man is not merely to set his teeth, and harden his heart against fate! And equally in prosperity is this larger estimate of our life, as from another world, needed. Success is a safe happiness to the Christian man who can look down upon it as from out the kingdom of heaven.

Success is a danger and snare of soul to that man who is not himself already in his heart above it. There is a Christian view of success which may render it both safe and pleasant for any one who has done any good deed to rejoice heartily as unto the Lord in his own work. It is the view in which one stands not alone, rejoicing in himself, but in which he sees himself to be but one of a large and blessed company of God's servants, by whom God's will is to be done on earth and in heaven. There is possible a broad and generous joy in one's own work and life, in which we go out of ourselves, blending our thanksgivings with the triumphs of all good men, and finding our lives to be part and portion of the universal gladness of God's saints. It is always safe for us to think of ourselves and our work, and our own position in the world, if we are careful not to look down and to measure ourselves merely by our shadows on things close at hand—our enlarged and unreal selves,—if we think rather of ourselves as we may hope some day to look back over our lives, when from beyond death we shall see how all along God's strong purpose ran before us, and his angels had charge over us, and the good which we may have done, or the success in which we may have rejoiced, was but our part in the good gift and the perfect boon which come from above.

This position, finally, as of one looking back upon this world, which we all need sometimes to take in the Christian imaginations of faith, is the position from which in a little while we must be judging all things both in life and death. Our whole life ere long shall be one finished picture in the retrospect. And may it lie

then behind us in the softening, hallowing light of God's grace ! By the grace of God, the penitent, converted man, even now judging himself as from out the hereafter, as Christ did the world, may say :—From my life I saw sin falling ; from the heaven of my desires I beheld Satan fallen ;—Behold God alone is reigning.

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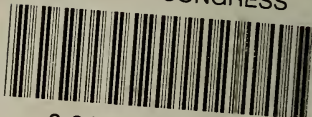
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